

THE
NOT TO BE ISSUED
HISTORY

OF THE

DECLINE AND FALL

OF THE

ROMAN EMPIRE.

BY EDWARD GIBBON, Esq.

IN TWELVE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

A NEW EDITION.



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THE
HISTORY
OF THE
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ROMAN EMPIRE.



CHAP. XI.

Reign of Claudius.—Defeat of the Goths.—Victories, triumph, and death, of Aurelian.

UNDER the deplorable reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, the empire was oppressed and almost destroyed by the soldiers, the tyrants, and the barbarians. It was saved by a series of great princes, who derived their obscure origin from the martial provinces of Illyricum. Within a period of about thirty years, Claudius, Aurelian, Probus, Diocletian and his colleagues, triumphed over the foreign and domestic enemies of the state, re-established with the military discipline, the strength of the frontiers, and deserved the glorious title of restorers of the Roman world.

CHAP.

XI.

Aureolus invades Italy ; is defeated and besieged at Milan.

A. D. 268.

The removal of an effeminate tyrant made way for a succession of heroes. The indignation of the people imputed all their calamities to Gallienus, and the far greater part were, indeed, the consequence of his dissolute manners and careless administration. He was even destitute of a sense of honour, which so frequently supplies the absence of public virtue ; and as long as he was permitted to enjoy the possession of Italy, a victory of the barbarians, the loss of a province, or the rebellion of a général, seldom disturbed the tranquil course of his pleasures. At length, a considerable army, stationed on the Upper Danube, invested with the imperial purple their leader Aureolus ; who disdaining a confined and barren reign over the mountains of Rhætia, passed the Alps, occupied Milan, threatened Rome, and challenged Gallienus to dispute in the field the sovereignty of Italy. The emperor, provoked by the insult, and alarmed by the instant danger, suddenly exerted that latent vigour, which sometimes broke through the indolence of his temper. Forcing himself from the luxury of the palace, he appeared in arms at the head of his legions, and advanced beyond the Po to encounter his competitor. The corrupted name of Pontirolo^a still preserves the memory of a bridge over the Adda, which, during the action, must have proved an

^a *Pons Aureoli*, thirteen miles from Bergamo, and thirty-two from Milan. See Cluver. *Italia Antiq.* tom. i, p. 245. Near this place, in the year 1703, the obstinate battle of Cassano was fought between the French and Austrians. The excellent relation of the Chevalier de Folard, who was present, gives a very distinct idea of the ground. See *Polybe de Folard*, tom. iii, p. 223-248.

object of the utmost importance to both armies. C H A P.
The Rhætian usurper, after receiving a total de- XI.
feat and a dangerous wound, retired into Milan.
The siege of that great city was immediately
formed; the walls were battered with every
engine in use among the ancients; and Aure-
olus, doubtful of his internal strength, and hope-
less of foreign succours, already anticipated the
fatal consequences of unsuccessful rebellion.

His last resource was an attempt to seduce the
loyalty of the besiegers. He scattered libels
through their camp, inviting the troops to desert
an unworthy master, who sacrificed the public
happiness to his luxury, and the lives of his most
valuable subjects to the slightest suspicions. The
arts of Aureolus diffused fears and discontent
among the principal officers of his rival. A con-
spiracy was formed by Heraclianus the prætorian
prefect, by Marcian, a general of rank and re-
putation, and by Cecrops, who commanded a nu-
merous body of Dalmatian guards. The death
of Gallienus was resolved; and notwithstanding
their desire of first terminating the siege of Mi-
lan, the extreme danger which accompanied every
moment's delay, obliged them to hasten the exe-
cution of their daring purpose. At a late hour of
the night, but while the emperor still protracted
the pleasures of the table, an alarm was suddenly
given, that Aureolus, at the head of all his forces,
had made a desperate sally from the town: Gal-
lienus, who was never deficient in personal bra-
very, started from his silken couch, and without

CHAP. allowing himself time either to put on his armour
 XI. or to assemble his guards, he mounted on horse-
 ***** back, and rode full speed towards the supposed
 place of the attack. Encompassed by his declared
 or concealed enemies, he soon, amidst the noc-
 turnal tumult, received a mortal dart from an
 uncertain hand. Before he expired, a patriotic
 sentiment rising in the mind of Gallienus, in-
 A. D. 268,duced him to name a deserving successor, and it
 March 20. was his last request, that the imperial ornaments
 Death of should be delivered to Claudio*s*, who then com-
 Gallienus. manded a detached army in the neighbourhood
 of Pavia. The report at least was diligently pro-
 pagated, and the order cheerfully obeyed by the
 conspirators, who had already agreed to place
 Claudio*s* on the throne. On the first news of the
 emperor's death, the troops expressed some sus-
 picion and resentment, till the one was removed,
 and the other assuaged, by a donative of twenty
 pieces of gold to each soldier. They then rati-
 fied the election, and acknowledged the merit,
 of their new sovereign.^b

Character
 and eleva-
 tion of the
 emperor
 Claudio*s*.

The obscurity which covered the origin of
 Claudio*s*, though it was afterwards embellished
 by some flattering fictions,^c sufficiently betrays

^b On the death of Gallienus, see Trebellius Pollio in *Hist. August.* p. 181. Zosimus, l. i, p. 37. Zonaras, l. xii, p. 634. Eutrop. ix, 11. Aurelius Victor in *Epitom.* Victor in *Cæsar.* I have compared and blended them all, but have chiefly followed Aurelius Victor, who seems to have had the best memoirs.

^c Some supposed him, oddly enough, to be a bastard of the younger Gordian. Others took advantage of the province of Dardania, to deduce his origin from Dardanus, and the ancient kings of Troy.

the meanness of his birth. We can only discover that he was a native of one of the provinces bordering on the Danube ; that his youth was spent in arms, and that his modest valour attracted the favour and confidence of Decius. The senate and people already considered him as an excellent officer, equal to the most important trusts ; and censured the inattention of Valerian, who suffered him to remain in the subordinate station of a tribune. But it was not long before that emperor distinguished the merit of Claudius, by declaring him general and chief of the Illyrian frontier, with the command of all the troops in Thrace, Mæsia, Dacia, Pannonia, and Dalmatia, the appointments of the prefect of Egypt, the establishment of the pro-consul of Africa, and the sure prospect of the consulship. By his victories over the Goths, he deserved from the senate the honour of a statue, and excited the jealous apprehensions of Gallienus. It was impossible that a soldier could esteem so dissolute a sovereign, nor is it easy to conceal a just contempt. Some unguarded expressions which dropt from Claudius, were officially transmitted to the royal ear. The emperor's answer to an officer of confidence, describes in very lively colours his own character and that of the times. " There is not any thing " capable of giving me more serious concern, " than the intelligence contained in your last dis- " patch :^a that some malicious suggestions have

^a *Notaria*, a periodical and official dispatch which the emperors received from the *frumentarii*, or agents dispersed through the provinces. Of these we may speak hereafter.

CHAP. " indisposed towards us the mind of our friend
XI. " and parent Claudius. As you regard your al-
" legiance, use every means to appease his re-
" sentment, but conduct your negociation with
" secrecy ; let it not reach the knowledge of the
" Dacian troops ; they are already provoked,
" and it might inflame their fury. I myself have
" sent him some presents : be it your care that
" he accept them with pleasure. Above all, let
" him not suspect that I am made acquainted
" with his imprudence. The fear of my anger
" might urge him to desperate counsels." The
presents which accompanied this humble epistle,
in which the monarch solicited a reconciliation
with his discontented subject, consisted of a con-
siderable sum of money, a splendid wardrobe,
and a valuable service of silver and gold plate.
By such arts Gallienus softened the indignation,
and dispelled the fears, of his Illyrian general ;
and during the remainder of that reign, the for-
midable sword of Claudius was always drawn in
the cause of a master whom he despised. At last,
indeed, he received from the conspirators the
bloody purple of Gallienus ; but he had been ab-
sent from their camp and counsels ; and however
he might applaud the deed, we may candidly
presume that he was innocent of the knowledge
of it.¹ When Claudius ascended the throne he
was about fifty-four years of age.

¹ Hist. August. p. 208. Gallienus describes the plate, vestments, &c. like a man who loved and understood those splendid trifles.

² Julian (Orat. i, p. 6) affirms that Claudius acquired the empire in a just and even holy manner. But we may distrust the partiality of a kinsman.

The siege of Milan was still continued, and CHAP. Aureolus soon discovered, that the success of his XI.
 artifices had only raised up a more determined ^{Death of} _{Aureolus.} adversary. He attempted to negotiate with Claudio-
 dius a treaty of alliance and partition. "Tell
 " him," replied the intrepid emperor, " that
 " such proposals should have been made to Gal-
 " lienus; *he*, perhaps, might have listened to
 " them with patience, and accepted a colleague
 " as despicable as himself."^g This stern refusal,
 and a last unsuccessful effort, obliged Aureolus
 to yield the city and himself to the discretion of
 the conqueror. The judgment of the army pro-
 nounced him worthy of death, and Claudio-
 dius, after a feeble resistance, consented to the execution of
 the sentence. Nor was the zeal of the senate less
 ardent in the cause of their new sovereign. They
 ratified, perhaps with sincere transports of zeal,
 the election of Claudio-
 dius; and as his predecessor
 had shewn himself the personal enemy of their
 order, they exercised under the name of justice
 a severe revenge against his friends and family.
 The senate was permitted to discharge the un-
 grateful office of punishment, and the emperor
 reserved for himself the pleasure and merit of
 obtaining by his intercession a general act of in-
 demnity.^h

^g Hist. August. p. 203. There are some trifling differences concerning the circumstances of the last defeat and death of Aureolus.

^h Aurelius Victor in Gallien. The people loudly prayed for the damnation of Gallienus. The senate decreed that his relations and servants should be thrown down headlong from the Gemonian stairs. An obnoxious officer of the revenue had his eyes torn out whilst under examination.

CHAP. Such ostentatious clemency discovers less of the
XI. real character of Claudius, than a trifling circum-
Clemency and justice of Clau-
dius. stance in which he seems to have consulted only
the dictates of his heart. The frequent rebel-
lions of the provinces had involved almost every
person in the guilt of treason, almost every estate
in the case of confiscation; and Gallienus often
displayed his liberality, by distributing among his
officers the property of his subjects. On the ac-
cession of Claudius, an old woman threw herself
at his feet, and complained that a general of the
late emperor had obtained an arbitrary grant of
her patrimony. This general was Claudius him-
self, who had not entirely escaped the contagion
of the times. The emperor blushed at the re-
proach, but deserved the confidence which she
had reposed in his equity. The confession of his
fault was accompanied with immediate and am-
ple restitution.¹

He under-
takes the
reforma-
tion of the
army.

In the arduous task which Claudius had under-
taken, of restoring the empire to its ancient splen-
dour, it was first necessary to revive among his
troops a sense of order and obedience. With the
authority of a veteran commander, he represented
to them, that the relaxation of discipline had in-
troduced a long train of disorders, the effects of
which were at length experienced by the soldiers
themselves; that a people ruined by oppression,
and indolent from despair, could no longer sup-
ply a numerous army with the means of luxury,
or even of subsistence; that the danger of each
individual had increased with the despotism of the

military order, since princes who tremble on the CHAP.
throne, will guard their safety by the instant sa- XI.
crifice of every obnoxious subject. The emperor
expatiated on the mischiefs of a lawless caprice,
which the soldiers could only gratify at the ex-
pence of their own blood; as their seditious elec-
tions had so frequently been followed by civil
wars, which consumed the flower of the legions
either in the field of battle or in the cruel abuse
of victory. He painted in the most lively colours
the exhausted state of the treasury, the desolation
of the provinces, the disgrace of the Roman
name, and the insolent triumph of rapacious bar-
barians. It was against those barbarians, he de-
clared, that he intended to point the first effort
of their arms. Tetricus might reign for a while
over the West, and even Zenobia might preserve
the dominion of the East.^k These usurpers were
his personal adversaries; nor could he think of
indulging any private resentment till he had
saved an empire whose impending ruin would,
unless it was timely prevented, crush both the
army and the people.

The various nations of Germany and Sarmatia,^{a. d. 269.}
who fought under the Gothic standard, had al-
ready collected an armament more formidable
than any which had yet issued from the Euxine.
The Goths
On the banks of the Niester, one of the great
rivers that discharge themselves into that sea,
they constructed a fleet of two thousand, or even
empire.

^k Zonaras on this occasion mentions Posthumus; but the registers
of the senate (Hist. August. p. 203) prove that Tetricus was already
emperor of the western provinces.

CHAP. of six thousand vessels;¹ numbers which, how-
ever incredible they may seem, would have been
insufficient to transport their pretended army of
three hundred and twenty thousand barbarians.
Whatever might be the real strength of the Goths,
the vigour and success of the expedition were not
adequate to the greatness of the preparations.
In their passage through the Bosphorus, the un-
skilful pilots were overpowered by the violence
of the current; and while the multitude of their
ships were crowded in a narrow channel, many
were dashed against each other, or against the
shore. The barbarians made several descents on
the coasts both of Europe and Asia; but the open
country was already plundered, and they were
repulsed with shame and loss from the fortified
cities which they assaulted. A spirit of discour-
agement and division arose in the fleet, and some
of their chiefs sailed away towards the islands of
Crete and Cyprus; but the main body pursuing
a more steady course, anchored at length near the
foot of mount Athos, and assaulted the city of
Thessalonica, the wealthy capital of all the Ma-
cedonian provinces. Their attacks, in which
they displayed a fierce but artless bravery, were
soon interrupted by the rapid approach of Clau-
dius, hastening to a scene of action that deserved
the presence of a warlike prince at the head of
the remaining powers of the empire. Impatient
for battle, the Goths immediately broke up their

¹ The Augustan history mentions the smaller, Zonaras the larger, number; the lively fancy of Montesquieu induced him to prefer the latter.

camp, relinquished the siege of Thessalonica, left their navy at the foot of mount Athos, traversed the hills of Macedonia, and pressed forwards to engage the last defence of Italy.

We still possess an original letter addressed by ^{Distress and firmness of} ^{Chap. XI.} Claudius to the senate and people on this memorable occasion. "Conscript fathers," says the emperor, "know that three hundred and twenty thousand Goths have invaded the Roman territory. If I vanquish them, your gratitude will reward my services. Should I fall, remember that I am the successor of Gallienus. The whole republic is fatigued and exhausted. We shall fight after Valerian, after Ingenuus, Regillianus, Lollianus, Posthumus, Celsus, and a thousand others, whom a just contempt for Gallienus provoked into rebellion. We are in want of darts, of spears, and of shields. The strength of the empire, Gaul and Spain, are usurped by Tetricus, and we blush to acknowledge that the archers of the East serve under the banners of Zenobia. Whatever we shall perform, will be sufficiently great." The melancholy firmness of this epistle announces a hero careless of his fate, conscious of his danger, but still deriving a well-grounded hope from the resources of his own mind.

The event surpassed his own expectations and those of the world. By the most signal victories ^{His victory over the Goths.} he delivered the empire from this host of barbarians, and was distinguished by posterity under

CHAP. the glorious appellation of the Gothic Claudius.

XI.

The imperfect historians of an irregular war* do not enable us to describe the order and circumstances of his exploits; but, if we could be indulged in the allusion, we might distribute into three acts this memorable tragedy. 1. The decisive battle was fought near Naissus, a city of Dardania. The legions at first gave way, oppressed by numbers, and dismayed by misfortunes. Their ruin was inevitable, had not the abilities of their emperor prepared a seasonable relief. A large detachment rising out of the secret and difficult passes of the mountains, which by his order they had occupied, suddenly assailed the rear of the victorious Goths. The favourable instant was improved by the activity of Claudius. He revived the courage of his troops, restored their ranks, and pressed the barbarians on every side. Fifty thousand men are reported to have been slain in the battle of Naissus. Several large bodies of barbarians, covering their retreat with a moveable fortification of waggons, retired, or rather escaped, from the field of slaughter. 2. We may presume that some insurmountable difficulty, the fatigue, perhaps, or the disobedience of the conquerors, prevented Claudius from completing in one day the destruction of the Goths. The war was diffused over the provinces of Mæsia, Thrace, and Macedonia, and its operations drawn out into a variety of marches, sur-

* Hist. August. in Claud. Aurelian. et Prob. Zosimus, 1. i. p. 38-42. Zonaras, 1. xii. p. 632. Aurel. Victor in. Epitom. Victor Junior in Caesar. Eutrop. ix, 11. Euseb. in Chron.

prises, and tumultuary engagements, as well by sea as by land. When the Romans suffered any loss, it was commonly occasioned by their own cowardice or rashness; but the superior talents of the emperor, his perfect knowledge of the country, and his judicious choice of measures as well as officers, assured on most occasions the success of his arms. The immense booty, the fruit of so many victories, consisted for the greater part of cattle and slaves. A select body of the Gothic youth was received among the imperial troops; the remainder was sold into servitude; and so considerable was the number of female captives, that every soldier obtained to his share two or three women. A circumstance from which we may conclude, that the invaders entertained some designs of settlement as well as of plunder; since even in a naval expedition they were accompanied by their families. ^{III.} The loss of their fleet, which was either taken or sunk, had intercepted the retreat of the Goths. A vast circle of Roman posts, distributed with skill, supported with firmness, and gradually closing towards a common centre, forced the barbarians into the most inaccessible parts of mount Hæmus, where they found a safe refuge, but a very scanty subsistence. During the course of a rigorous winter, in which they were besieged by the emperor's troops, famine and pestilence, desertion and the sword, continually diminished the imprisoned multitude. On the return of spring, nothing appeared in arms except a hardy and desperate

CHAP.
XL.

March.
Death of
the empe-
ror, who
recom-
mends
Aurelian
for his suc-
cessor.

band, the remnant of that mighty host which had embarked at the mouth of the Niester.

The pestilence which swept away such numbers of the barbarians, at length proved fatal to their conqueror. After a short but glorious reign of two years, Claudius expired at Sirmium, amidst the tears and acclamations of his subjects. In his last illness, he convened the principal officers of the state and army, and in their presence recommended Aurelian, one of his generals, as the most deserving of the throne, and the best qualified to execute the great design which he himself had been permitted only to undertake. The virtues of Claudius, his valour, affability,⁹ justice, and temperance, his love of fame and of his country, place him in that short list of emperors who added lustre to the Roman purple. Those virtues, however, were celebrated with peculiar zeal and complacency by the courtly writers of the age of Constantine, who was the great grandson of Crispus, the elder brother of Claudius. The voice of flattery was soon taught to repeat, that the gods, who so hastily had snatched Claudius from the earth, rewarded his merit and piety by the perpetual establishment of the empire in his family.¹⁰

⁹ According to Zonaras (l. xii, p. 638), Claudius, before his death, invested him with the purple; but this singular fact is rather contradicted than confirmed by other writers.

¹⁰ See the life of Claudius by Pollio, and the orations of Mamertinus, Eumenius, and Julian. See likewise the Caesars of Julian, p. 313. In Julian it was not adulation, but superstition and vanity.

Notwithstanding these oracles, the greatness of the Flavian family (a name which it had pleased them to assume) was deferred above twenty years, and the elevation of Claudius occasioned the immediate ruin of his brother Quintilius, who possessed not sufficient moderation or courage to descend into the private station to which the patriotism of the late emperor had condemned him. Without delay or reflection, he assumed the purple at Aquileia, where he commanded a considerable force; and though his reign lasted only seventeen days, he had time to obtain the sanction of the senate, and to experience a mutiny of the troops. As soon as he was informed that the great army of the Danube had invested the well-known valour of Aurelian with imperial power, he sunk under the fame and merit of his rival; and ordering his veins to be opened, prudently withdrew himself from the unequal contest.⁴

The general design of this work will not permit us minutely to relate the actions of every emperor after he ascended the throne, much less to deduce the various fortunes of his private life. We shall only observe, that the father of Aurelian was a peasant of the territory of Sirmium, who occupied a small farm, the property of Aurielius, a rich senator. His warlike son enlisted in the troops as a common soldier, successively

⁴ Zosimus, I. i. p. 42. Follio (Hist. August. p. 207) allows him virtues, and says, that like Pertinax he was killed by the licentious soldiers. According to Dexippus, he died of a disease.

CHAP.
XI.The at-
tempt and
fall of
Quintilius.

April.

Origin and
services of
Aurelian.

CHAP. rose to the rank of a centurion, a tribune, the
 XI. prefect of a legion, the inspector of the camp; the general, or, as it was then called, the duke, of a frontier; and at length, during the Gothic war, exercised the important office of commander in chief of the cavalry. In every station he distinguished himself by matchless valour,^r rigid discipline, and successful conduct. He was invested with the consulship by the emperor Valerian, who styles him, in the pompous language of that age, the deliverer of Illyricum, the restorer of Gaul, and the rival of the Scipios. At the recommendation of Valerian, a senator of the highest rank and merit, Ulpius Crinitus, whose blood was derived from the same source as that of Trajan, adopted the Pannonian peasant, gave him his daughter in marriage, and relieved with his ample fortune the honourable poverty which Aurelian had preserved inviolate.^s

Aurelian's successful reign. The reign of Aurelian lasted only four years and about nine months; but every instant of that short period was filled by some memorable achievement. He put an end to the Gothic war, chastised the Germans who invaded Italy, recovered Gaul, Spain, and Britain out of the hands of Tetricus, and destroyed the proud monarchy

^r Theoclius as (quoted in the Augustan History, p. 211) affirms, that in one day he killed with his own hand, forty-eight Sarmatians, and in several subsequent engagements nine hundred and fifty. This heroic valour was admired by the soldiers, and celebrated in their rude songs, the burden of which was *mille, mille, mille, occidit.*

^s Aucholius (ap. Hist. August. p. 213) describes the ceremony of the adoption, as it was performed at Byzantium, in the presence of the emperor and his great officers.

which Zenobia had erected in the East, on the CHAP.
ruins of the afflicted empire. XI.

It was the rigid attention of Aurelian, even to ^{His severe} ~~the minutest~~ discipline, which bestowed such uninterrupted success on his arms. His military regulations are contained in a very concise epistle to one of his inferior officers, who is commanded to enforce them, as he wishes to become a tribune, or as he is desirous to live. Gaming, drinking, and the arts of divination, were severely prohibited. Aurelian expected that his soldiers should be modest, frugal, and laborious; that their armour should be constantly kept bright, their weapons sharp, their clothing and horses ready for immediate service; that they should live in their quarters with chastity and sobriety; without damaging the corn fields; without stealing even a sheep, a fowl, or a bunch of grapes; without exacting from their landlords either salt, or oil, or wood. "The public allowance," continues the emperor, "is sufficient for their support; their wealth should be collected from the spoil of the enemy, not from the tears of the provincials." A single instance will serve to display the rigour, and even cruelty, of Aurelian. One of the soldiers had seduced the wife of his host. The guilty wretch

⁴ Hist. August. p. 211. This laconic epistle is truly the work of a soldier; it abounds with military phrases and words, some of which cannot be understood without difficulty. *Ferramenta sumiata* is well explained by Salmasius. The former of the words means all weapons of offence, and is contrasted with *arma*, defensive armour. The latter signifies keen and well sharpened.

CHAP. was fastened to two trees forcibly drawn towards
XI. each other, and his limbs were torn asunder by
their sudden separation. A few such examples
impressed a salutary consternation. The punishments
of Aurelian were terrible; but he had sel-
dom occasion to punish more than once the same
offence. His own conduct gave a sanction to his
laws; and the seditious legions dreaded a chief
who had learned to obey, and who was worthy
to command.

He con-
cludes a
treaty with
the Goths,

The death of Claudio had revived the faint-
ing spirit of the Goths. The troops which
guarded the passes of Mount Hæmus and the
banks of the Danube, had been drawn away by
the apprehension of a civil war; and it seems
probable that the remaining body of the Gothic
and Vandalic tribes embraced the favourable op-
portunity, abandoned their settlements of the
Ukraine, traversed the rivers, and swelled with
new multitudes the destroying host of their coun-
trymen. Their united numbers were at length
encountered by Aurelian, and the bloody and
doubtful conflict ended only with the approach
of night.^a Exhausted by so many calamities,
which they had mutually endured and inflicted
during a twenty years war, the Goths and the
Romans consented to a lasting and beneficial
treaty. It was earnestly solicited by the barba-
rians, and cheerfully ratified by the legions, to
whose suffrage the prudence of Aurelian referred
the decision of that important question. The

^a Zosim. l. i, p. 45.

Gothic nation engaged to supply the armies of Rome with a body of two thousand auxiliaries, consisting entirely of cavalry, and stipulated in return an undisturbed retreat, with a regular market as far as the Danube, provided by the emperor's care, but at their own expence. The treaty was observed with such religious fidelity, that when a party of five hundred men straggled from the camp in quest of plunder, the king or general of the barbarians commanded that the guilty leader should be apprehended and shot to death with darts, as a victim devoted to the sanctity of their engagements. It is, however, not unlikely, that the precaution of Aurelian, who had exacted as hostages the sons and daughters of the Gothic chiefs, contributed something to this pacific temper. The youths he trained in the exercise of arms, and near his own person: to the damsels he gave a liberal and Roman education; and by bestowing them in marriage on some of his principal officers, gradually introduced between the two nations the closest and most endearing connections.*

But the most important condition of peace was understood rather than expressed in the treaty. Aurelian withdrew the Roman forces from Dacia, and tacitly relinquished that great province to the Goths and Vandals.^y His manly judgment

and resigns
to them the
province of
Dacia.

* Dexippus (ap. Excerpta Legat. p. 12) relates the whole transaction under the name of Vandals. Aurelian married one of the Gothic ladies to his general Bonosus, who was able to drink with the Goths, and discover their secrets. Hist. August. p. 247.

^y Hist. August. p. 222. Eutrop. ix, 15. Sextus Rufus, c. 9. Iacob. Tantius de mortibus Persecutorum, c. 9.

CHAP. convinced him of the solid advantages, and taught
XI. him to despise the seeming disgrace, of thus contracting the frontiers of the monarchy. The Dacian subjects, removed from those distant possessions which they were unable to cultivate or defend, added strength and populousness to the southern side of the Danube. A fertile territory, which the repetition of barbarous inroads had changed into a desert, was yielded to their industry; and a new province of Dacia still preserved the memory of Trajan's conquests. The old country of that name detained, however, a considerable number of its inhabitants, who dreaded exile more than a Gothic master.² These degenerate Romans continued to serve the empire, whose allegiance they had renounced by introducing among their conquerors the first notions of agriculture, the useful arts, and the conveniences of civilised life. An intercourse of commerce and language was gradually established between the opposite banks of the Danube; and after Dacia became an independent state, it often proved the firmest barrier of the empire against the invasions of the savages of the north. A sense of interest attached these more settled barbarians to the alliance of Rome; and a permanent interest very frequently ripens into sincere and useful friendship. This various colony, which

² The Wallachians still preserve many traces of the Latin language, and have boasted, in every age, of their Roman descent. They are surrounded by, but not mixed with, the barbarians. See a memoir of M. d'Anville on ancient Dacia, in the Academy of Inscriptions, tom. xxx.

filled the ancient province, and was insensibly blended into one great people, still acknowledged the superior renown and authority of the Gothic tribe, and claimed the fancied honour of a Scandinavian origin. At the same time the lucky though accidental resemblance of the name of Gæta infused among the credulous Goths a vain persuasion, that, in a remote age, their own ancestors, already seated in the Dacian provinces, had received the instructions of Zamolxis, and checked the victorious arms of Sesostris and Darius.^a

While the vigorous and moderate conduct of ^{The Ale-}
^{mannic} Aurelian restored the Illyrian frontier, the na-^m war.
tion of the Alemanni^b violated the conditions of peace, which either Gallienus had purchased, or Claudius had imposed, and, inflamed by their impatient youth, suddenly flew to arms. Forty thousand horse appeared in the field,^c and the numbers of the infantry doubled those of the cavalry.^d The first objects of their avarice were a few cities of the Rhætian frontier; but

^a See the first chapter of Jornandes. The Vandals, however (c. 22), maintained a short independence between the rivers Marisia and Crissia (Maros and Keres) which fell into the Teiss.

^b Dexippus, p. 7-12. Zosimus, l. i. p. 43. Vopiscus in Aurelian, in Hist. August. However these historians differ in names (Alemanni, Juthungi, and Marcomanni), it is evident that they mean the same people, and the same war; but it requires some care to conciliate and explain them.

^c Cantoclarus, with his usual accuracy, chooses to translate three hundred thousand: his version is equally repugnant to sense and to grammar.

^d We may remark, as an instance of bad taste, that Dexippus applies to the light infantry of the Alemanni the technical terms proper only to the Grecian phalanx.

CHAP. their hopes soon rising with success, the rapid
 XI. march of the Alemanni traced a line of devastation from the Danube to the Po.*

A. D. 270,
September.

The emperor was almost at the same time informed of the irruption, and of the retreat, of the barbarians. Collecting an active body of troops, he marched with silence and celerity along the skirts of the Hercynian forest; and the Alemanni, laden with the spoils of Italy, arrived at the Danube, without suspecting, that on the opposite bank, and in an advantageous post, a Roman army lay concealed and prepared to intercept their return. Aurelian indulged the fatal security of the barbarians, and permitted about half their forces to pass the river without disturbance and without precaution. Their situation and astonishment gave him an easy victory; his skilful conduct improved the advantage. Disposing the legions in a semi-circular form, he advanced the two horns of the crescent across the Danube, and wheeling them on a sudden towards the centre, inclosed the rear of the German host. The dismayed barbarians, on whatsoever side they cast their eyes, beheld with despair a wasted country, a deep and rapid stream, a victorious and implacable enemy.

Reduced to this distressed condition, the Alemanni no longer disdained to sue for peace. Aurelian received their ambassadors at the head of his camp, and with every circumstance of

* In Dexippus, we at present read Rhedanus; M. de Valois very judiciously alters the word to Eridanus.

martial pomp that could display the greatness and discipline of Rome. The legions stood to their arms in well-ordered ranks and awful silence. The principal commanders, distinguished by the ensigns of their rank, appeared on horseback on either side of the imperial throne. Behind the throne, the consecrated images of the emperor, and his predecessors,^f the golden eagles, and the various titles of the legions, engraved in letters of gold, were exalted in the air on lofty pikes covered with silver. When Aurelian assumed his seat, his manly grace and majestic figure^g taught the barbarians to revere the person as well as the purple of their conqueror. The ambassadors fell prostrate on the ground in silence. They were commanded to rise, and permitted to speak. By the assistance of interpreters they extenuated their perfidy, magnified their exploits, expatiated on the vicissitudes of fortune and the advantages of peace; and, with an ill-timed confidence, demanded a large subsidy, as the price of the alliance which they offered to the Romans. The answer of the emperor was stern and imperious. He treated their offer with contempt, and their demand with indignation; reproached the barbarians, that they were as ignorant of the arts of war as of the laws of peace; and finally dismissed them with the choice only of submitting to his un-

^f The emperor Claudius was certainly of the number; but we are ignorant how far this mark of respect was extended: if to Caesar and Augustus, it must have produced a very awful spectacle; a long line of the masters of the world.

^g Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 210.

CHAP. conditioned mercy, or awaiting the utmost severity of his resentment.^h. Aurelian had resigned XI. a distant province to the Goths; but it was dangerous to trust or to pardon these perfidious barbarians, whose formidable power kept Italy itself in perpetual alarms.

The Ale-
manni in-
vade Italy,

Immediately after this conference, it should seem that some unexpected emergency required the emperor's presence in Pannonia. He devolved on his lieutenants the care of finishing the destruction of the Alemanni, either by the sword, or by the surer operation of famine. But an active despair has often triumphed over the indolent assurance of success. The barbarians, finding it impossible to traverse the Danube and the Roman camp, broke through the posts in their rear, which were more feebly or less carefully guarded; and with incredible diligence, but by a different road, returned towards the mountains of Italy.ⁱ Aurelian, who considered the war as totally extinguished, received the mortifying intelligence of the escape of the Alemanni, and of the ravage which they already committed in the territory of Milan. The legions were commanded to follow, with as much expedition as those heavy bodies were capable of exerting, the rapid flight of an enemy, whose infantry and cavalry moved with almost equal swiftness. A few days afterwards the emperor himself marched to the relief of Italy, at the

^h Dexippus gives them a subtle and prolix oration, worthy of a Grecian sophist.

ⁱ Hist. August. p. 215.

head of a chosen body of auxiliaries (among whom were the hostages and cavalry of the Vandals), and of all the prætorian guards who had served in the wars on the Danube.^k

As the light troops of the Alemanni had spread themselves from the Alps to the Appenine, the incessant vigilance of Aurelian and his officers was exercised in the discovery, the attack, and the pursuit, of the numerous detachments. Notwithstanding this desultory war, three considerable battles are mentioned, in which the principal force of both armies was obstinately engaged.^l The success was various. In the first, fought near Placentia, the Romans received so severe a blow, that, according to the expression of a writer extremely partial to Aurelian, the immediate dissolution of the empire was apprehended.^m The crafty barbarians, who had lined the woods, suddenly attacked the legions in the dusk of the evening, and, it is most probable, after the fatigue and disorder of a long march. The fury of their charge was irresistible; but at length, after a dreadful slaughter, the patient firmness of the emperor rallied his troops, and restored, in some degree, the honour of his arms. The second battle was fought near Fano in Umbria; on the spot which, five hundred years before, had been fatal to the brother of Hannibal.ⁿ Thus far the successful Germans

^k Dexippus, p. 12.

^l Victor Junior in Aurelian.

^m Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216.

ⁿ The little river, or rather torrent, of Metaurus near Fano, has been immortalized, by finding such an historian as Livy, and such a poet as Horace.

CHAP. had advanced along the Æmilian and Flaminian
 XI. way, with a design of sacking the defenceless
 mistress of the world. But Aurelian, who,
 watchful for the safety of Rome, still hung on
 their rear, found in this place the decisive mo-
 ment of giving them a total and irretrievable
 defeat.* The flying remnant of their host was
 exterminated in a third and last battle near
 Pavia; and Italy was delivered from the inroads
 of the Alemanni.

Supersti-
tious cere-
monies.

Fear has been the original parent of super-
 stition; and every new calamity urges trembling
 mortals to deprecate the wrath of their invisible
 enemies. Though the best hope of the republic
 was in the valour and conduct of Aurelian, yet
 such was the public consternation, when the
 barbarians were hourly expected at the gates of
 Rome, that, by a decree of the senate, the Sibyl-
 line books were consulted. Even the emperor
 himself, from a motive either of religion or of
 policy, recommended this salutary measure,
 chided the tardiness of the senate,^p and offered
 to supply whatever expence, whatever animals,
 whatever captives of any nation, the gods should
 require. Notwithstanding this liberal offer, it
 does not appear, that any human victims expi-
 ated with their blood the sins of the Roman
 people. The Sibylline books enjoined ceremonies
 of a more harmless nature; processions of priests

A. D. 271,
 Jan. 11.

* It is recorded by an inscription found at Pezaro. See Gruter, clxxvi, 3.

^p One should imagine, he said, that you were assembled in a christien church, not in the temple of all the gods.

in white robes, attended by a chorus of youths and virgins; illustrations of the city and adjacent country; and sacrifices, whose powerful influence disabled the barbarians from passing the mystic ground on which they had been celebrated. However puerile in themselves, these superstitious arts were subservient to the success of the war; and if, in the decisive battle of Fano, the Alemanni fancied they saw an army of spectres combating on the side of Aurelian, he received a real and effectual aid from this imaginary reinforcement.⁴

But whatever confidence might be placed in ideal ramparts, the experience of the past, and the dread of the future, induced the Romans to construct fortifications of a grosser and more substantial kind. The seven hills of Rome had been surrounded, by the successors of Romulus, with an ancient wall of more than thirteen miles.⁵ The vast inclosure may seem disproportioned to the strength and numbers of the infant state. But it was necessary to secure an

CHAP.

XI.

⁴ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 215, 216, gives a long account of these ceremonies, from the registers of the senate.

⁵ Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 5. To confirm our idea, we may observe, that for a long time mount Cælius was a grove of oaks, and mount Viminal was overrun with osiers; that, in the fourth century, the Aventine was a vacant and solitary retirement; that, till the time of Augustus, the Esquiline was an unwholesome burying-ground; and that the numerous inequalities, remarked by the ancients in the Quirinal, sufficiently prove that it was not covered with buildings. Of the seven hills, the Capitoline and Palatine only, with the adjacent vallies, were the primitive habitation of the Roman people. But this subject would require a dissertation.

CHAP. ample extent of pasture and arable land, against
 XI. the frequent and sudden incursions of the tribes
 of Latium, the perpetual enemies of the republic. With the progress of Roman greatness the city and its inhabitants gradually increased, filled up the vacant space, pierced through the useless walls, covered the field of Mars, and, on every side, followed the public highways in long and beautiful suburbs.^s The extent of the new walls, erected by Aurelian, and finished in the reign of Probus, was magnified by popular estimation to near fifty,^t but is reduced by accurate measurement to about twenty-one miles.^u It was a great but melancholy labour, since the defence of the capital betrayed the decline of the monarchy. The Romans of a more prosperous age, who trusted to the arms of the legions the safety of the frontier camps,^x were very far from entertaining a suspicion, that it would ever become necessary to fortify the seat of empire against the inroads of the barbarians.^y

Aurelian suppresses the two usurpers. The victory of Claudius over the Goths, and the success of Aurelian against the Alemanni, had already restored to the arms of Rome their ancient superiority over the barbarous nations

^s *Exspatiantia tecta multas addidere urbes*, is the expression of Pliny.

^t *Hist. August.* p. 222. Both Lipsius and Isaac Vossius have eagerly embraced this measure.

^u See Nardini, *Roma Antica*, I. i, c. 8.

^x *Tacit. Hist.* iv, 23.

^y For Aurelian's walls, see Vopiscus in *Hist. August.* p. 216, 222. Zosimus, I. i, p. 43. Eutropius, ix, 15. Aurel. Victor. in *Aurelian. Victor Junior in Aurelian.* Euseb. Hieronym. et Idatius in *Chronic.*

of the north. To chastise domestic tyrants, and to re-unite the dismembered parts of the empire, was a task reserved for the second of those warlike emperors. Though he was acknowledged by the senate and people, the frontiers of Italy, Africa, Illyricum, and Thrace, confined the limits of his reign. Gaul, Spain, and Britain, Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor, were still possessed by two rebels, who alone, out of so numerous a list, had hitherto escaped the dangers of their situation; and to complete the ignominy of Rome, these rival thrones had been usurped by women.

A rapid succession of monarchs had arisen and fallen in the provinces of Gaul. The rigid virtues of Posthumus served only to hasten his destruction. After suppressing a competitor, who had assumed the purple at Mentz, he refused to gratify his troops with the plunder of the rebellious city; and, in the seventh year of his reign, became the victim of their disappointed avarice.² The death of Victorinus, his friend and associate, was occasioned by a less worthy cause. The shining accomplishments³ of that prince were stained by a licen-

CHAP.
XI.Succession
of usurpers
in Gaul.

² His competitor was Lollianus, or Elianus, if indeed these names mean the same person. See Tillement, tom. iii, p. 1177.

³ The character of this prince by Julius Aterianus (ap. Hist. August. p. 187) is worth transcribing, as it seems fair and impartial. *Victe ino qd post Junium Posthumium Gallias rexit neminem existimo praeferdunt; non in virtute Trajanum; non Antoninum in clementi; non in gravitate Nervam; non in gubernando serario Vespasianum; non in Censura totius vite ac severitate militari Pertinacem vel Severum. Sed omnia hac libido et cupiditas voluptatis mulierariae sic perdidit, ut nemo audeat virtutes ejus in literas mittere quem constat omnium iudicio meruisse puniri.*

CHAP. tious passion, which he indulged in acts of
XI. violence, with too little regard to the laws of
society or even to those of love.^b He was
slain at Cologne, by a conspiracy of jealous hus-
bands, whose revenge would have appeared more
justifiable, had they spared the innocence of his
son. After the murder of so many valiant princes,
it is somewhat remarkable, that a female for a
long time controlled the fierce legions of Gaul,
and still more singular, that she was the mother
of the unfortunate Victorinus. The arts and
treasures of Victoria enabled her successively to
place Marius and Tetricus on the throne, and
to reign with a manly vigour under the name of
those dependent emperors. Money of copper,
of silver, and of gold, was coined in her name;
she assumed the titles of Augusta and Mother
of the Camps: her power ended only with her
life; but her life was perhaps shortened by the
ingratitude of Tetricus.^c

The reign
and defeat
of Tetricus.

When, at the instigation of his ambitious pa-
troness, Tetricus assumed the ensigns of royalty,
he was governor of the peaceful province of
Aquitaine, an employment suited to his charac-
ter and education. He reigned four or five
years over Gaul, Spain, and Britain, the slave
and sovereign of a licentious army, whom he
dreaded, and by whom he was despised. The
valour and fortune of Aurelian at length opened

^b He ravished the wife of Attitianus, an *actuary*, or army agent. Hist. August. p. 186. Aurel. Victor in Aurelian.

^c Pollio assigns her an article among the thirty tyrants. Hist. Au-
gust. p. 200.

the prospect of a deliverance. He ventured to disclose his melancholy situation, and conjured the emperor to hasten to the relief of his unhappy rival. Had this secret correspondence reached the ears of the soldiers, it would most probably have cost Tetricus his life; nor could he resign the sceptre of the West without committing an act of treason against himself. He affected the appearances of a civil war, led his forces into the field against Aurelian, posted them in the most disadvantageous manner, betrayed his own counsels to the enemy, and, with a few chosen friends, deserted in the beginning of the action. The rebel legions, though disordered and dismayed by the unexpected treachery of their chief, defended themselves with desperate valour, till they were cut in pieces almost to a man, in this bloody and memorable battle, which was fought near Chalons in Champagne.^a The retreat of the irregular auxiliaries, Franks and Batavians,^b whom the conqueror soon compelled or persuaded to repass the Rhine, restored the general tranquillity; and the power of Aurelian was ac-

CHAP.
XI.A. D. 271,
Summer.

^a Pollio in Hist. August. p. 196. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 220. The two Victors, in the lives of Gallienus and Aurelian. Eutrop. ix, 13. Euseb. in Chron. Of all these writers, only the two last (but with strong probability) place the fall of Tetricus before that of Zenobia. M. de Boze (in the Academy of Inscriptions, tom. xxx) does not wish, and Tillemont (tom. iii, p. 1189) does not dare, to follow them. I have been fairer than the one, and bolder than the other.

^b Victor Junior in Aurelian. Eumenius mentions *Batavice*; some critics, without any reason, would fain alter the word to *Bagaudice*.

CHAP. knowledged from the wall of Antoninus to the
XI. columns of Hercules.

As early as the reign of Claudius, the city of Auton, alone and unassisted, had ventured to declare against the legions of Gaul. After a siege of seven months, they stormed and plundered that unfortunate city, already wasted by famine.^f Lyons, on the contrary, had resisted with obstinate disaffection the arms of Aurelian. We read of the punishment of Lyons,^g but there is not any mention of the rewards of Autun. Such, indeed, is the policy of civil war: severely to remember injuries, and to forget the most important services. Revenge is profitable; gratitude is expensive.

A. D. 272, Character of Zenobia; provinces of Tetricus, than he turned his arms against Zenobia, the celebrated queen of Palmyra and the East. Modern Europe has produced several illustrious women, who have sustained, with glory, the weight of empire; nor is our own age destitute of such distinguished characters. But if we except the doubtful achievements of Semiramis, Zenobia is perhaps the only female whose superior genius broke through the servile indolence imposed on her sex by the climate and manners of Asia.^h She claimed her

^f Eumen. in Vet. Panegyr. iv, 8.

^g Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 246. Autun was not restored till the reign of Diocletian. See Eumenius de restaurandis scholis.

^h Almost every thing that is said of the manners of Odenathus and Zenobia is taken from their lives in the Augustan History, by Tребellius Pollio, see p. 192, 198.

descent from the Macedonian kings of Egypt, CHAP. equalled in beauty her ancestor Cleopatra, and far surpassed that princess in chastity¹ and valour. Zenobia was esteemed the most lovely as her beauty well as the most heroic of her sex. She was of a dark complexion (for in speaking of a lady, these trifles become important). Her teeth were of a pearly whiteness, and her large black eyes sparkled with uncommon fire, tempered by the most attractive sweetness. Her voice was strong and harmonious. Her manly understanding was strengthened and adorned by study. She was not ignorant of the Latin tongue, but possessed in equal perfection the Greek, the Syriac, and the Egyptian languages. She had drawn up for her own use an epitome of oriental history, and familiarly compared the beauties of Homer and Plato, under the tuition of the sublime Longinus.

This accomplished woman gave her hand to Odenathus, who, from a private station, raised himself to the dominion of the East. She soon became the friend and companion of a hero. In the intervals of war, Odenathus passionately delighted in the exercise of hunting; he pursued with ardour the wild beasts of the desert, lions, panthers, and bears; and the ardour of Zenobia in that dangerous amusement was not inferior to his own. She had inured her constitution to fatigue, disdained the use of a covered carriage,

¹ She never admitted her husband's embraces but for the sake of posterity. If her hopes were baffled, in the ensuing month she reiterates the experiment.

CHAP. generally appeared on horseback in a military
 XI. habit, and sometimes marched several miles on
 foot at the head of the troops. The success of
 Odenathus was in a great measure ascribed to her
 incomparable prudence and fortitude. Their
 splendid victories over the great king, whom
 they twice pursued as far as the gates of Ctesiphon,
 laid the foundations of their united fame and power.
 The armies which they commanded, and the pro-
 vinces which they had saved, acknowledged not
 any other sovereigns than their invincible chiefs.
 The senate and people of Rome revered a stranger
 who had avenged their captive emperor, and even
 the insensible son of Valerian accepted Odenathus
 for his legitimate colleague.

She re-
 venges her
 husband's
 death,

After a successful expedition against the Gothic plunderers of Asia, the Palmyrenian prince returned to the city of Emesa in Syria. Invincible in war, he was there cut off by domestic treason, and his favourite amusement of hunting was the cause, or at least the occasion, of his death.* His nephew, Mæonius, presumed to dart his javelin before that of his uncle; and though admonished of his error, repeated the same insolence. As a monarch, and as a sportsman, Odenathus was provoked, took away his horse, a mark of ignominy among the barbarians, and chastised the rash youth by a short confinement. The offence was soon forgot, but the punishment

* Hist. August. p. 192, 193. Zosimus, I. i, p. 36. Zonaras, I. xii, p. 633. The last is clear and probable, the others confused and inconsistent. The text of Syncellus, if not corrupt, is absolute non-sense.

was remembered; and Mæonius, with a few daring associates, assassinated his uncle in the midst of a great entertainment. Herod, the son of Odenathus, though not of Zenobia, a young man of a soft and effeminate temper,¹ was killed with his father. But Mæonius obtained only the pleasure of revenge by this bloody deed. He had scarcely time to assume the title of Augustus, before he was sacrificed by Zenobia to the memory of her husband.²

With the assistance of his most faithful friends, she immediately filled the vacant throne, and governed with manly counsels Palmyra, Syria, and the East, above five years. By the death of Odenathus, that authority was at an end which the senate had granted him only as a personal distinction; but his martial widow, disdaining both the senate and Gallienus, obliged one of the Roman generals, who was sent against her, to retreat into Europe, with the loss of his army and his reputation.³ Instead of the little passions which so frequently perplex a female reign, the steady administration of Zenobia was guided by the most judicious maxims of policy. If it was expedient to pardon, she could calm her resentment; if it was necessary to punish, she could impose silence on the voice of pity. Her

¹ Odenathus and Zenobia often sent him, from the spoils of the enemy, presents of gems and toys, which he received with infinite delight.

² Some very unjust suspicions have been cast on Zenobia, as if she was accessory to her husband's death.

³ Hist. August. p. 180, 181.

CHAP. strict economy was accused of avarice ; yet on
XI. every proper occasion she appeared magnificent
..... and liberal. The neighbouring states of Arabia,
Armenia, and Persia, dreaded her enmity, and
solicited her alliance. To the dominions of
Odenathus, which extended from the Euphrates
to the frontiers of Bithynia, his widow added the
inheritance of her ancestors, the populous and
fertile kingdom of Egypt. The emperor Clau-
dius acknowledged her merit, and was content,
that, while *he* pursued the Gothic war, *she* should
assert the dignity of the empire in the East.*
The conduct, however, of Zenobia was attended
with some ambiguity ; nor is it unlikely that she
had conceived the design of erecting an inde-
pendent and hostile monarchy. She blended
with the popular manners of Roman princes the
stately pomp of the courts of Asia, and exacted
from her subjects the same adoration that was
paid to the successors of Cyrus. She bestowed
on her three sons^p a Latin education, and often
shewed them to the troops adorned with the im-
perial purple. For herself she reserved the dia-
dem, with the splendid but doubtful title of
queen of the East.

* See, in Hist. August. p. 198, Aurelian's testimony to her mer-
it ; and for the conquest of Egypt, Zosimus, l. i, p. 39, 40.

^p Timolaus, Herennianus, and Vaballathus. It is supposed that
the two former were already dead before the war. On the last, Au-
relian bestowed a small province of Armenia, with the title of king :
several of his medals are still extant. See Tillemont, tom. iii, p.
1190.

When Aurelian passed over into Asia, against an adversary whose sex alone could render her an object of contempt, his presence restored obedience to the province of Bithynia, already shaken by the arms and intrigues of Zenobia.⁴ Advancing at the head of his legions, he accepted the submission of Ancyra, and was admitted into Tyana, after an obstinate siege, by the help of a perfidious citizen. The generous though fierce temper of Aurelian abandoned the traitor to the rage of the soldiers : a superstitious reverence induced him to treat with lenity the countrymen of Apollonius the philosopher.⁵ Antioch was deserted on his approach, till the emperor, by his salutary edicts, recalled the fugitives, and granted a general pardon to all who, from necessity rather than choice, had been engaged in the service of the Palmyrenian queen. The unexpected mildness of such a conduct reconciled the minds of the Syrians, and, as far as the gates of Emesa, the wishes of the people seconded the terror of his arms.⁶

Zenobia would have ill deserved her reputation, had she indolently permitted the emperor of the West to approach within an hundred miles of her capital. The fate of the East was decided in two great battles ; so similar in almost

⁴ Zosimus, 1. 1, p. 44.

⁵ Vopiscus (in Hist. August. p. 217) gives us an authentic letter, and a doubtful vision of Aurelian. Appollonius of Tyana was born about the same time as Jesus Christ. His life (that of the former) is related in so fabulous a manner by his disciples, that we are at a loss to discover whether he was a sage, an impostor, or a fanatic.

Zosimus, 1. 1, p. 46.

CHAP.
XL

every circumstance, that we can scarcely distinguish them from each other, except by observing that the first was fought near Antioch,^t and the second near Emesa.^u In both, the queen of Palmyra animated the armies by her presence, and devolved the execution of her orders on Zabdus, who had already signalized his military talents by the conquest of Egypt. The numerous forces of Zenobia consisted for the most part of light archers, and of heavy cavalry clothed in complete steel. The Moorish and Illyrian horse of Aurelian were unable to sustain the ponderous charge of their antagonists. They fled in real or affected disorder, engaged the Palmyrenians in a laborious pursuit, harassed them by a desultory combat, and at length discomfited this impenetrable but unwieldy body of cavalry. The light infantry, in the mean time, when they had exhausted their quivers, remaining without protection against a closer onset, exposed their naked sides to the swords of the legions. Aurelian had chosen these veteran troops, who were usually stationed on the Upper Danube, and whose valour had been severely tried in the Alemannic war.^x After the defeat of Emesa, Zenobia found it impossible to collect a third army. As far as the frontier of Egypt, the nations subject to her empire had joined the standard of the

^t At a place called Immæ. Eutropius, Sextus Rufus, and Jerome, mention only this first battle.

^u Vopiscus, in Hist. August. p. 217, mentions only the second.

^x Zosimus, I. i. p. 44-48. His account of the two battles is clear and circumstantial.

conqueror, who detached Probus, the bravest of his generals, to possess himself of the Egyptian provinces. Palmyra was the last resource of the widow of Odenathus. She retired within the walls of her capital, made every preparation for a vigorous resistance, and declared with the intrepidity of a heroine, that the last moment of her reign and of her life should be the same.

CHAP.
XI.

Amid the barren deserts of Arabia, a few cultivated spots rise like islands out of the sandy ocean. Even the name of Tadmor, or Palmyra, by its signification in the Syriac as well as in the Latin language, denoted the multitude of palm trees which afforded shade and verdure to that temperate region. The air was pure, and the soil, watered by some invaluable springs, was capable of producing fruit as well as corn. A place possessed of such singular advantages, and situated at a convenient distance^y between the gulph of Persia and the Mediterranean, was soon frequented by the caravans which conveyed to the nations of Europe a considerable part of the rich commodities of India. Palmyra insensibly increased into an opulent and independent city, and connecting the Roman and the Parthian monarchies by the mutual benefits of commerce, was suffered to observe an humble neutrality, till at length, after the victories of Trajan, the little republic sunk into the bosom of

The state
of Palmyra.

^y It was five hundred and thirty-seven miles from Seleucia, and two hundred and three from the nearest coast of Syria, according to the reckoning of Pliny, who, in a few words (*Hist. Natur. v, 21*), gives an excellent description of Palmyra.

CHAP. Rome, and flourished more than one hundred
 XI. and fifty years in the subordinate though honourable rank of a colony. It was during that peaceful period, if we may judge from a few remaining inscriptions, that the wealthy Palmyrenians constructed those temples, palaces, and porticos, of Grecian architecture, whose ruins, scattered over an extent of several miles, have deserved the curiosity of our travellers. The elevation of Odenathus and Zenobia appeared to reflect new splendour on their country, and Palmyra, for a while, stood forth the rival of Rome: but the competition was fatal, and ages of prosperity were sacrificed to a moment of glory.²

It is besieged by
Aurelian,

In his march over the sandy desert between Emesa and Palmyra, the emperor Aurelian was perpetually harassed by the Arabs; nor could he always defend his army, and especially his baggage, from those flying troops of active and daring robbers, who watched the moment of surprise, and eluded the slow pursuit of the legions. The siege of Palmyra was an object far more difficult and important, and the emperor, who with incessant vigour, pressed the attacks in person, was himself wounded with a dart, “The Roman people,” says Aurelian, in an original letter, “speak with contempt of the

² Some English travellers from Aleppo discovered the ruins of Palmyra, about the end of the last century. Our curiosity has since been gratified in a more splendid manner by Messieurs Wood and Dawkins. For the history of Palmyra, we may consult the masterly dissertation of Dr. Halley in the Philosophical Transactions; Lowthorp's Abridgement, vol. iii, p. 518.

war which I am waging against a woman. CHAP.
 They are ignorant both of the character and XL
 of the power of Zenobia. It is impossible to
 enumerate her warlike preparations, of stones,
 of arrows, and of every species of missile wea-
 pons. Every part of the walls is provided
 with two or three *balistae*, and artificial fires
 are thrown from her military engines. The
 fear of punishment has armed her with a des-
 perate courage. Yet still I trust in the pro-
 tecting deities of Rome, who have hitherto
 been favourable to all my undertakings.”^a
 Doubtful, however, of the protection of the gods,
 and of the event of the siege, Aurelian judged it
 more prudent to offer terms of an advantageous
 capitulation; to the queen, a splendid retreat; to
 the citizens, their ancient privileges. His pro-
 posals were obstinately rejected, and the refusal
 was accompanied with insult.

The firmness of Zenobia was supported by the hope, that in a very short time famine would compel the Roman army to repass the desert; and by the reasonable expectation that the king who be-
comes
master of
Zenobia
and of the
city. of the East, and particularly the Persian monarch, would arm in the defence of their most natural ally. But fortune and the perseverance of Aurelian overcame every obstacle. The death of Sapor, which happened about this time,^b distracted the councils of Persia, and the inconsiderable succours that attempted to relieve Pal-

^a Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 218.

^b From a very doubtful chronology I have endeavoured to extract the most probable date.

CHAP. myra, were easily intercepted either by the arms
 XI. or the liberality of the emperor. From every
 part of Syria, a regular succession of convoys
 safely arrived in the camp, which was increased
 by the return of Probus with his victorious troops
 from the conquest of Egypt. It was then that
 Zenobia resolved to fly. She mounted the fleetest
 of her dromedaries,^c and had already reached
 the banks of the Euphrates, about sixty miles
 from Palmyra, when she was overtaken by the
 pursuit of Aurelian's light horse, seized, and
 brought back a captive to the feet of the em-
 peror. Her capital soon afterwards surrendered,
 and was treated with unexpected lenity. The
 arms, horses, and camels, with an immense
 treasure of gold, silver, silk, and precious stones,
 were all delivered to the conqueror; who, leaving
 only a garrison of six hundred archers, returned
 to Emesa, and employed some time in the distri-
 bution of rewards and punishments at the end of
 so memorable a war, which restored to the obe-
 dience of Rome those provinces that had re-
 nounced their allegiance since the captivity of
 Valerian.

Behaviour
 of Zenobia.

When the Syrian queen was brought into the
 presence of Aurelian, he sternly asked her, how

^c Hist. August. p. 218. Zosimus, l. i, p. 50. Though the camel
 is a heavy beast of burden, the dromedary, who is either of the same
 or of a kindred species, is used by the natives of Asia and Africa, on
 all occasions which require celerity. The Arabs affirm, that he will
 run over as much ground in one day, as their fleetest horses can per-
 form in eight or ten. See Buffon Hist. Naturelle, tom. xi, p. 222,
 and Shaw's Travels, p. 167.

she had presumed to rise in arms against the emperors of Rome ? The answer of Zenobia was a prudent mixture of respect and firmness. " Because I disdained to consider as Roman emperors an Aureolus or a Gallienus. You alone I acknowledge as my conqueror and my sovereign."^a But as female fortitude is commonly artificial, so it is seldom steady or consistent. The courage of Zenobia deserted her in the hour of trial; she trembled at the angry clamours of the soldiers, who called aloud for her immediate execution; forgot the generous despair of Cleopatra, which she had proposed as her model; and ignominiously purchased life by the sacrifice of her fame and her friends. It was to their counsels, which governed the weakness of her sex, that she imputed the guilt of her obstinate resistance; it was on their heads that she directed the vengeance of the cruel Aurelian. The fame of Longinus, who was included among the numerous and perhaps innocent victims of her fear, will survive that of the queen who betrayed, or the tyrant who condemned him. Genius and learning were incapable of moving a fierce unlettered soldier, but they had served to elevate and harmonise the soul of Longinus. Without uttering a complaint, he calmly followed the executioner, pitying his unhappy mistress, and bestowing comfort on his afflicted friends.^c

^a Pollio in Hist. p. 199.

^c Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 219. Zosimus, 1. i. p. 51.

CHAP.

XI.

Rebellion
and ruin
of Palmy-
ra.

Returning from the conquest of the East, Aurelian had already crossed the straits which divide Europe from Asia, when he was provoked by the intelligence that the Palmyrenians had massacred the governor and garrison which he had left among them, and again erected the standard of revolt. Without a moment's deliberation, he once more turned his face towards Syria. Antioch was alarmed by his rapid approach, and the helpless city of Palmyra felt the irresistible weight of his resentment. We have a letter of Aurelian himself, in which he acknowledges,⁵ that old men, women, children, and peasants, had been involved in that dreadful execution, which should have been confined to armed rebellion; and although his principal concern seems directed to the re-establishment of a temple of the sun, he discovers some pity for the remnant of the Palmyrenians, to whom he grants the permission of rebuilding and inhabiting their city. But it is easier to destroy than to restore. The seat of commerce, of arts, and of Zenobia, gradually sunk into an obscure town, a trifling fortress, and at length a miserable village. The present citizens of Palmyra, consisting of thirty or forty families, have erected their mud-cottages within the spacious court of a magnificent temple.

Aurelian
suppresses
the rebel-
lion of
Firmus in
Egypt.

Another and a last labour still awaited the indefatigable Aurelian; to suppress a dangerous though obscure rebel, who, during the revolt of

Palmyra, had arisen on the banks of the Nile. CHAP. XI. Firmus, the friend and ally, as he proudly styled himself, of Odenathus and Zenobia, was no more than a wealthy merchant of Egypt. In the course of his trade to India, he had formed very intimate connexions with the Saracens and the Blemmyes, whose situation on either coast of the Red Sea gave them an easy introduction into the Upper Egypt. The Egyptians he inflamed with the hope of freedom, and, at the head of their furious multitude, broke into the city of Alexandria, where he assumed the imperial purple, coined money, published edicts; and raised an army, which, as he vainly boasted, he was capable of maintaining from the sole profits of his paper trade. Such troops were a feeble defence against the approach of Aurelian; and it seems almost unnecessary to relate, that Firmus was routed, taken, tortured, and put to death. Aurelian might now congratulate the senate, the people, and himself, that in little more than three years he had restored universal peace and order to the Roman world.⁶

Since the foundation of Rome, no general had ^{A. D. 274.} more nobly deserved a triumph than Aurelian; Triumph of Aurelian nor was a triumph ever celebrated with supe-

⁶ See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 220, 242. As an instance of luxury, it is observed, that he had glass windows. He was remarkable for his strength and appetite, his courage and dexterity. From the letter of Aurelian, we may justly infer, that Firmus was the last of the rebels, and consequently that Tetricus was already suppressed.

CHAP. prior pride and magnificence.^h The pomp was XI. opened by twenty elephants, four royal tigers, and above two hundred of the most curious animals from every climate of the north, the east, and the south. They were followed by sixteen hundred gladiators, devoted to the cruel amusement of the amphitheatre. The wealth of Asia, the arms and ensigns of so many conquered nations, and the magnificent plate and wardrobe of the Syrian queen, were disposed in exact symmetry or artful disorder. The ambassadors of the most remote parts of the earth, of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, Bactriana, India, and China, all remarkable by their rich or singular dresses, displayed the fame and power of the Roman emperor, who exposed likewise to the public view the presents that he had received, and particularly a great number of crowns of gold, the offerings of grateful cities. The victories of Aurelian were attested by the long train of captives who reluctantly attended his triumph, Goths, Vandals, Sarmatians, Alemanni, Franks, Gauls, Syrians, and Egyptians. Each people was distinguished by its peculiar inscription, and the title of Amazons was bestowed on ten martial heroines of the Gothic nation who had been taken in arms.ⁱ But every eye, disregarding

^h See the triumph of Aurelian, described by Vopiscus. He relates the particulars with his usual minuteness; and, on this occasion, they happen to be interesting. Hist. August. p. 220.

ⁱ Among barbarous nations, women have often combated by the side of their husbands. But it is almost impossible, that a society of Amazons should ever have existed either in the old or new world.

the crowd of captives, was fixed on the emperor CHAP.
XI. Tetricus, and the queen of the East. The former, as well as his son, whom he had created Augustus, was dressed in Gallic trowsers,^k a saffron tunic, and a robe of purple. The beauteous figure of Zenobia was confined by fetters of gold; a slave supported the gold chain which encircled her neck, and she almost fainted under the intolerable weight of jewels. She preceded on foot the magnificent chariot, in which she once hoped to enter the gates of Rome. It was followed by two other chariots, still more sumptuous, of Odenathus and of the Persian monarch. The triumphal car of Aurelian (it had formerly been used by a Gothic king) was drawn on this memorable occasion, either by four stags or by four elephants.^l The most illustrious of the senate, the people, and the army, closed the solemn procession. Unfeigned joy, wonder, and gratitude, swelled the acclamations of the multitude; but the satisfaction of the senate was clouded by the appearance of Tetricus; nor could they suppress a rising murmur, that the haughty emperor should thus expose to public

^k The use of *braccae*, breeches, or trowsers, was still considered in Italy as a Gallic and barbarian fashion. The Romans, however, had made great advances towards it. To encircle the legs and thighs with *fuscae*, or bands, was understood, in the time of Pompey and Horace, to be a proof of ill health and effeminacy. In the age of Trajan, the custom was confined to the rich and luxurious. It gradually was adopted by the meanest of the people. See a very curious note of Casaubon, ad Sueton. in August. c. 82.

^l Most probably the former; the latter, seen on the medals of Aurelian, only denote (according to the learned cardinal Norris) an oriental victory.

CHAP. XI. ignominy the person of a Roman and a magistrate.^m

His treatment of Tetricus and Zenobia.

But however, in the treatment of his unfortunate rivals, Aurelian might indulge his pride, he behaved towards them with a generous clemency, which was seldom exercised by the ancient conquerors. Princes who, without success, had defended their throne or freedom, were frequently strangled in prison, as soon as the triumphal pomp ascended the capitol. These usurpers, whom their defeat had convicted of the crime of treason, were permitted to spend their lives in affluence and honourable repose. The emperor presented Zenobia with an elegant villa at Tibur or Tivoli, about twenty miles from the capital; the Syrian queen insensibly sunk into a Roman matron, her daughters married into noble families, and her race was not yet extinct in the fifth century.ⁿ Tetricus and his son were reinstated in their rank and fortunes. They erected on the Cælian hill a magnificent palace, and as soon as it was finished, invited Aurelian to supper. On his entrance, he was agreeably surprised with a picture which represented their singular history. They were delineated offering to the emperor a civic crown and the sceptre of Gaul, and again receiving at his hands the orna-

^m The expression of Calphurnius (Eclog. i. 50), *Nullos ducet captiva triumphos*, as applied to Rome, contains a very manifest allusion and censure.

ⁿ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 199. Hieronym. in Chron. Prosper in Chron. Baronius supposes that Zenobius, bishop of Florence in the time of St. Ambrose, was of her family.

ments of the senatorial dignity. The father was afterwards invested with the government of ^{CHAP.} ~~Lu-~~ ^{XI.} ~~cania~~ ;^o and Aurelian, who soon admitted the abdicated monarch to his friendship and conversation, familiarly asked him, Whether it were not more desirable to administer a province of Italy, than to reign beyond the Alps? The son long continued a respectable member of the senate; nor was there any one of the Roman nobility more esteemed by Aurelian, as well as by his successors.^p

So long and so various was the pomp of Aurelian's triumph, <sup>His magni-
fcence and
devotion.</sup> that although it opened with the dawn of day, the slow majesty of the procession ascended not the capitol before the ninth hour; and it was already dark when the emperor returned to the palace. The festival was protracted by theatrical representations, the games of the circus, the hunting of wild beasts, combats of gladiators, and naval engagements. Liberal donatives were distributed to the army and people; and several institutions, agreeable or beneficial to the city, contributed to perpetuate the glory of Aurelian. A considerable portion of his oriental spoils was consecrated to the gods of Rome; the capitol, and every other temple, glittered with the offerings of his ostentatious piety; and the temple of the sun alone received

^o Vopisc. in Hist. August. p. 222. Eutropius, ix. 13. Victor junior. But Pollio, in Hist. August. p. 196, says, that Tetricus was made corrector of all Italy.

^p Hist. August. p. 197.

CHAP. above fifteen thousand pounds of gold.⁴ This
 XI. last was a magnificent structure, erected by the
 emperor on the side of the Quirinal hill, and
 dedicated, soon after the triumph, to that deity
 whom Aurelian adored as the parent of his life
 and fortunes. His mother had been an inferior
 priestess in a chapel of the sun; a peculiar de-
 votion to the god of light was a sentiment
 which the fortunate peasant imbibed in his in-
 fancy; and every step of his elevation, every
 victory of his reign, fortified superstition by gra-
 titude.⁵

He sup-
presses a
sedition at
Rome.

The arms of Aurelian had vanquished the fo-
 reign and domestic foes of the republic. We
 are assured, that, by his salutary rigour, crimes
 and factions, mischievous arts and pernicious
 connivance, the luxuriant growth of a feeble and
 oppressive government, were eradicated through-
 out the Roman world.⁶ But if we attentively
 reflect how much swifter is the progress of cor-
 ruption than its cure, and if we remember that
 the years abandoned to public disorders exceeded
 the months allotted to the martial reign of Aure-
 lian, we must confess that a few short intervals
 of peace were insufficient for the arduous work

⁴ Vopiscus in Hist. August. 222. Zosimus, l. i, p. 56. He placed in it the images of Belus and of the Sun, which he had brought from Palmyra. It was dedicated in the fourth year of his reign (Euseb. in Chron.), but was most assuredly begun immediately on his accession.

⁵ See in the Augustan History, p. 210, the omens of his fortune. His devotion to the sun appears in his letters, on his medals, and is mentioned in the Caesars of Julian. Commentaire de Spanheim, p. 109.

⁶ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 221.

of reformation. Even his attempt to restore the CHAP.
integrity of the coin was opposed by a formidable
insurrection. The emperor's vexation breaks
out in one of his private letters: "Surely,"
says he, "the gods have decreed that my life
"should be a perpetual warfare. A sedition
"within the walls has just now given birth to a
"very serious civil war. The workmen of the
"mint, at the instigation of Felicissimus, a slave
"to whom I had entrusted an employment in
"the finances, have risen in rebellion. They
"are at length suppressed; but seven thousand
"of my soldiers have been slain in the contest;
"of those troops whose ordinary station is in
"Dacia, and the camps along the Danube."^t
Other writers, who confirm the same fact, add
likewise, that it happened soon after Aurelian's
triumph; that the decisive engagement was fought
on the Cælian hill; that the workmen of the
mint had adulterated the coin; and that the
emperor restored the public credit, by delivering
out good money in exchange for the bad, which
the people was commanded to bring into the
treasury.^u

We might content ourselves with relating this ^{Observa-}
extraordinary transaction; but we cannot dissem- ^{tions up-}
ble how much in its present form it appears to
us inconsistent and incredible. The debasement
of the coin is indeed well suited to the adminis-
tration of Gallienus; nor is it unlikely that the

^t Hist. August. p. 222. Aurelian calls those soldiers *Hiberi Ripa-rienses, Castriani, and Dacisci.*

^u Zosimus, l. 1, p. 55. Eutropius, ix, 14. Aurel. Victor.

CHAP. instruments of the corruption might dread the
XI. inflexible justice of Aurelian. But the guilt, as
..... well as the profit, must have been confined to a
few; nor is it easy to conceive by what arts they
could arm a people whom they had injured,
against a monarch whom they had betrayed.
We might naturally expect, that such miscreants
should have shared the public detestation, with
the informers and the other ministers of oppres-
sion; and that the reformation of the coin should
have been an action equally popular with the
destruction of those obsolete accounts, which by
the emperor's orders were burnt in the forum
of Trajan.² In an age when the principles of
commerce were so imperfectly understood, the
most desirable end might perhaps be effected by
harsh and injudicious means; but a temporary
grievance of such a nature can scarcely excite
and support a serious civil war. The repetition
of intolerable taxes, imposed either on the land
or on the necessaries of life, may at last provoke
those who will not, or who cannot, relinquish
their country; but the case is far otherwise in
every operation which, by whatsoever expedients,
restores the just value of money. The transient
evil is soon obliterated by the permanent bene-
fit; the loss is divided among multitudes; and if
a few wealthy individuals experience a sensible
diminution of treasure, with their riches, they
at the same time lose the degree of weight and
importance which they derived from the possess-

sion of them. However Aurelian might chuse to disguise the real cause of the insurrection, his reformation of the coin could only furnish a faint pretence to a party already powerful and discontented. Rome, though deprived of freedom, was distracted by faction. The people, towards whom the emperor, himself a plebeian, always expressed a peculiar fondness, lived in perpetual dissension with the senate, the equestrian order,¹ and the praetorian guards.² Nothing less than the firm though secret conspiracy of those orders, of the authority of the first, the wealth of the second, and the arms of the third, could have displayed a strength capable of contending in battle with the veteran legions of the Danube, which, under the conduct of a martial sovereign, had achieved the conquest of the West and of the East.

Whatever was the cause or the object of this bellion, imputed with so little probability to workmen of the mint, Aurelian used his victory with unrelenting rigour.³ He was naturally of a severe disposition. A peasant and a soldier, his nerves yielded not easily to the impressions of sympathy, and he could sustain without emotion the sight of tortures and death. Trained from his earliest youth in the exercise

¹ It already raged before Aurelian's return from Egypt. See Vopiscus, who quotes an original letter. Hist. August. p. 244.

² Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 222. The two Victors. Eutropius, ix. 14. Zosimus (l. i. p. 43) mentions only three senators, and places their death before the eastern war.

CHAP. of arms, he set too small a value on the life of a
 XI. citizen, chastised by military execution the slight-
 est offences, and transferred the stern discipline
 of the camp into the civil administration of the
 laws. His love of justice often became a blind
 and furious passion; and whenever he deemed
 his own or the public safety endangered, he dis-
 regarded the rules of evidence, and the propor-
 tion of punishments. The unprovoked rebel-
 lion with which the Romans rewarded his ser-
 vices exasperated his haughty spirit. The
 noblest families of the capital were involved in
 the guilt or suspicion of this dark conspiracy. A
 hasty spirit of revenge urged the bloody prose-
 cution, and it proved fatal to one of the nephews
 of the emperor. The executioners (if we may
 use the expression of a contemporary poet) were
 fatigued, the prisons were crowded, and the
 unhappy senate lamented the death or absence
 of its most illustrious members.^a Nor was the
 pride of Aurelian less offensive to that assembly
 than his cruelty. Ignorant or impatient of the
 restraints of civil institutions, he disdained to hold
 his power by any other title than that of the
 sword, and governed by right of conquest an
 empire which he had saved and subdued.^b

^a Nulla catenati feralis pompa senatus
 Carnificum lassabit opus; nec carcere pleno
 Infelix raros numerabit curia patres.

Calphurn. Eclog. i, 60.

^b According to the younger Victor, he sometimes wore the diadem.
Deus and *Dominus* appear on his medals.

It was observed by one of the most sagacious of the Roman princes, that the talents of his predecessor Aurelian were better suited to the command of an army, than to the government of an empire.* Conscious of the character in which nature and experience had enabled him to excel, he again took the field a few months after his triumph. It was expedient to exercise the less temper of the legions in some foreign war; and the Persian monarch, exulting in the shame of Valerian, still braved with impunity the offended majesty of Rome. At the head of an army, less formidable by its numbers than by its discipline and valour, the emperor advanced as far as the straits which divide Europe from Asia. He there experienced, that the most absolute power is a weak defence against the effects of despair. He had threatened one of his secretaries who was accused of extortion; and it was known that he seldom threatened in vain. The last hope which remained for the criminal was to involve some of the principal officers of the army in his danger, or at least in his fears. Artfully counterfeiting his master's hand, he shewed them, in a long and bloody list, their own names devoted to death. Without suspecting or examining the fraud, they resolved to secure their lives by the murder of the emperor. On his march, between Byzantium and Heraclea, Aurelian was suddenly attacked by the conspi-

* It was the observation of Diocletian. See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 224.

CHAP. XI. tors, whose stations gave them a right to surround his person, and after a short resistance, fell by the hand of Mucapor, a general whom he had always loved and trusted. He died regretted by the army, detested by the senate, but universally acknowledged as a warlike and fortunate prince, the useful though severe reformer of a degenerate state.^d

A. D. 275,
January.

^d Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 221. Zosimus, I. i, p. 57. Eutrop. ix, 15. The two Victors.

CHAP. XII.

Conduct of the army and senate after the death of Aurelian.—Reigns of Tacitus, Probus, Carus, and his sons.

SUCH was the unhappy condition of the Roman emperors, that whatever might be their conduct, their fate was commonly the same. A life of pleasure or virtue, of severity or mildness, of indolence or glory, alike led to an untimely grave; and almost every reign is closed by the same disgusting repetition of treason and murder. The death of Aurelian, however, is remarkable by its extraordinary consequences. The legions admired, lamented, and revenged, their victorious chief. The artifice of his perfidious secretary was discovered and punished. The deluded aspirators attended the funeral of their injured sovereign, with sincere or well-feigned contrition, and submitted to the unanimous resolution of the military order, which was signified by the following epistle: “ The brave and fortunate armies to the senate and people of Rome. “ The crime of one man, and the error of many, “ have deprived us of the late emperor Aurelian. “ May it please you, venerable lords and fathers! “ to place him in the number of the gods, and “ to appoint a successor whom your judgment shall declare worthy of the imperial purple! “ None of those, whose guilt or misfortune have

CHAP.
XII.

extraordi-
nary con-
test be-
tween the
army and
the senate
for the
choice of
an empe-
ror.

CHAP. " contributed to our loss, shall ever reign over
XIL " us."²² The Roman senators heard, without
surprise, that another emperor had been assassinated
in his camp; they secretly rejoiced in the
fall of Aurelian; but the modest and dutiful ad-
dress of the legions, when it was communicated
in full assembly by the consul, diffused the most
pleasing astonishment. Such honours as fear and
perhaps esteem could extort, they liberally poured
forth on the memory of their deceased sovereign.
Such acknowledgements as gratitude could in-
spire, they returned to the faithful armies of the
republic, who entertained so just a sense of the
legal authority of the senate in the choice of an
emperor. Yet, notwithstanding this flattering
appeal, the most prudent of the assembly declined
exposing their safety and dignity to the caprice
of an armed multitude. The strength of the le-
gions was, indeed, a pledge of their sincerity,
since those who may command are seldom re-
duced to the necessity of dissembling; but could
it naturally be expected, that a hasty repentance
would correct the inveterate habits of fourscore
years? Should the soldiers relapse into their ac-
customed seditions, their insolence might disgrace
the majesty of the senate, and prove fatal to the
object of its choice. Motives like these dictated
a decree, by which the election of a new em-
peror was referred to the suffrage of the military
order.

* Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 222. Aurelius Victor mentions a formal deputation from the troops to the senate.

The contention that ensued is one of the best attested, but most improbable, events in the history of mankind.^b The troops, as if satiated with the exercise of power, again conjured the senate to invest one of its own body with the imperial purple. The senate still persisted in its refusal; the army in its request. The reciprocal offer was pressed and rejected at least three times, and whilst the obstinate modesty of either party was resolved to receive a master from the hands of the other, eight months insensibly elapsed: an amazing period of tranquil anarchy, during which the Roman world remained without a sovereign, without an usurper, and without a sedition. The generals and magistrates appointed by Aurelian continued to execute their ordinary functions; and it is observed, that a proconsul of Asia was the only considerable person removed from his office, in the whole course of the interregnum.

An event somewhat similar, but much less authentic, is supposed to have happened after the death of Romulus, who, in his life and character, bore some affinity with Aurelian. The throne was vacant during twelve months, till the election of a Sabine philosopher; and the public peace was guarded in the same manner, by the union of the several orders of the state. But, in the

CHAP.
XII.

A. D. 275,
Feb. 3.
A peaceful
interreg-
num of
eight
months.

^b Vopiscus, our principal authority, wrote at Rome, sixteen years only after the death of Aurelian; and, besides the recent notoriety of the facts, constantly draws his materials from the Journals of the senate, and the original papers of the Ulpian library. Zosimus and Zonaras appear as ignorant of this transaction as they were in general of the Roman constitution.

CHAP.
XII.

time of Numa and Romulus, the arms of the people were controlled by the authority of the patricians; and the balance of freedom was easily preserved in a small and virtuous community.⁶ The decline of the Roman state, far different from its infancy, was attended with every circumstance that could banish from an interregnum the prospect of obedience and harmony: an immense and tumultuous capital, a wide extent of empire, the servile equality of despotism, an army of four hundred thousand mercenaries, and the experience of frequent revolutions. Yet, notwithstanding all these temptations, the discipline and memory of Aurelian still restrained the seditious temper of the troops, as well as the fatal ambition of their leaders. The flower of the legions maintained their stations on the banks of the Bosphorus, and the imperial standard awed the less powerful camps of Rome and of the provinces. A generous though transient enthusiasm seemed to animate the military order; and we may hope that a few real patriots cultivated the returning friendship of the army and the senate, as the only expedient capable of restoring the public to its ancient beauty and vigour.

A. D. 275,
Sept. 25.
The consul
assembles
the senate.

On the twenty-fifth of September, near eight months after the murder of Aurelian, the consul convoked an assembly of the senate, and reported

⁶ Liv. i, 17. Dionys. Halicarn. i. ii, p. 115. Plutarch in Numa, p. 60. The first of these writers relates the story like an orator, the second like a lawyer, and the third like a moralist, and none of them probably without some intermixture of fable.

the doubtful and dangerous situation of the empire. He slightly insinuated, that the precarious loyalty of the soldiers depended on the chance of every hour, and of every accident; but he represented, with the most convincing eloquence, the various dangers that might attend any farther delay in the choice of an emperor. Intelligence, he said, was already received, that the Germans had passed the Rhine, and occupied some of the strongest and most opulent cities of Gaul. The ambition of the Persian king kept the East in perpetual alarms; Egypt, Africa, and Illyricum, were exposed to foreign and domestic arms; and the levity of Syria would prefer even a female sceptre to the sanctity of the Roman laws. The consul then addressing himself to Tacitus, the first of the senators,^a required his opinion on the important subject of a proper candidate for the vacant throne.

If we can prefer personal merit to accidental greatness, we shall esteem the birth of Tacitus more truly noble than that of kings. He claimed his descent from the philosophic historian, whose writings will instruct the last generations of mankind.^b The senator Tacitus was then seventy-

Character
of Tacitus.

^a Vopiscus (in Hist. August. p. 227) calls him 'princeps sententiae consularis,' and soon afterwards *princeps senatus*. It is natural to suppose, that the monarchs of Rome, disdaining that humble title, resigned it to the most ancient of the senators.

^b The only objection to this genealogy is, that the historian was named Cornelius, the emperor, Claudius. But under the lower empire, surnames were extremely various and uncertain.

CHAP. ^{XII.} five years of age.^f The long period of his innocent life was adorned with wealth and honours. He had twice been invested with the consular dignity,^g and enjoyed with elegance and sobriety his ample patrimony of between two and three millions sterling.^h The experience of so many princes, whom he had esteemed or endured, from the vain follies of Elagabalus to the useful rigour of Aurelian, taught him to form a just estimate of the duties, the dangers, and the temptations, of their sublime station. From the assiduous study of his immortal ancestor he derived the knowledge of the Roman constitution, and of human nature.ⁱ The voice of the people had already named Tacitus as the citizen the most worthy of empire. The ungrateful rumour reached his ears, and induced him to seek the retirement of one of his villas in Campania. He had passed two months in the delightful privacy of Baiæ, when he reluctantly obeyed the sum-

^f Zonaras, I. xii, p. 637. The Alexandrian Chronicle, by an obvious mistake, transfers that age to Aurelian.

^g In the year 273, he was ordinary consul. But he must have been suffectus many years before, and most probably under Valerian.

^h *Bis millies octingenties.* Vospiseus in Hist. August. p. 229. This sum, according to the old standard, was equivalent to eight hundred and forty thousand Roman pounds of silver, each of the value of three pounds sterling. But in the age of Tacitus, the coin had lost much of its weight and purity.

ⁱ After his accession, he gave orders that ten copies of the historian should be annually transcribed and placed in the public libraries. The Roman libraries have long since perished, and the most valuable part of Tacitus was preserved in a single ms. and discovered in a monastery of Westphalia. See Bayle, Dictionnaire, art. *Tacite*, and Lipsius ad Annal. ii, 9.

mons of the consul to resume his honourable place in the senate, and to assist the republic with his counsels on this important occasion.

CHAP.

XII.

He arose to speak, when, from every quarter of the house, he was saluted with the names of Augustus and emperor. “ Tacitus Augustus, “ the gods preserve thee, we chuse thee for our sovereign, to thy care we entrust the republic and the world. Accept the empire from the authority of the senate. It is due to thy rank, to thy conduct, to thy manners.” As soon as the tumult of acclamations subsided, Tacitus attempted to decline the dangerous honour, and to express his wonder, that they should elect his age and infirmities to succeed the martial vigour of Aurelian. “ Are these limbs, conscript fathers ! fitted to sustain the weight of armour, or to practise the exercises of the camp ? The variety of climates, and the hardships of a military life, would soon oppress a feeble constitution, which subsists only by the most tender management. My exhausted strength scarcely enables me to discharge the duty of a senator ; how insufficient would it prove to the arduous labours of war and government ? Can you hope that the legions will respect a weak old man, whose days have been spent in the shade of peace and retirement ? Can you desire that I should ever find reason to regret the favourable opinion of the senate ? ”

The reluctance of Tacitus, and it might possibly be sincere, was encountered by the affectation and accepts the purple.

CHAP. tionate obstinacy of the senate. Five hundred
 XII. voices repeated at once, in eloquent confusion,
 that the greatest of the Roman princes, Numa,
 Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, had ascended
 the throne in a very advanced season of life ;
 that the mind, not the body ; a sovereign, not a
 soldier, was the object of their choice ; and that
 they expected from him no more than to guide
 by his wisdom the valour of the legions. These
 pressing though tumultuary instances were se-
 conded by a more regular oration of Metius Fal-
 conius, the next on the consular bench to Ta-
 citus himself. He reminded the assembly of the
 evils which Rome had endured from the vices of
 headstrong and capricious youths, congratulated
 them on the election of a *virtutus* and experi-
 enced senator, and, with a manly, though per-
 haps a selfish, freedom, exhorted Tacitus to re-
 member the reasons of his elevation, and to seek
 a successor, not in his own family, but in the
 republic. The speech of Falconius was enforced
 by a general acclamation. The emperor elect
 submitted to the authority of his country, and
 received the voluntary homage of his equals.
 The judgment of the senate was confirmed by the
 consent of the Roman people, and of the *praetor-
 ian* guards.¹

Authority
 of the se-
 nate.

The administration of Tacitus was not unworthy of his life and principles. A grateful servant of the senate, he considered that national

¹ Hist. August. p. 228. Tacitus addressed the praetorians by the appellation of *sanctissimi milites*, and the people by that of *sacra-
 tissimi quirites*.

council as the author, and himself as the subject, of the laws.^m He studied to heal the wounds which imperial pride, civil discord, and military violence, had inflicted on the constitution, and to restore at least the image of the ancient republic, as it had been preserved by the policy of Augustus and the virtues of Trajan and the Antonines. It may not be useless to recapitulate some of the most important prerogatives which the senate appeared to have regained by the election of Tacitus.ⁿ 1. To invest one of their body, under the title of emperor, with the general command of the armies, and the government of the frontier provinces. 2. To determine the list, or as it was then styled, the college of consuls. They were twelve in number, who, in successive pairs, each, during the space of two months, filled the year, and represented the dignity of that ancient office. The authority of the senate, in the nomination of the consuls, was exercised with such independent freedom, that no regard was paid to an irregular request of the emperor in favour of his brother Florianus. “The senate,” exclaimed Tacitus, with the honest transport of a patriot, “understand the character of a prince whom they have chosen.”

^m In his manumissions he never exceeded the number of an hundred, as limited by the Caninian law, which was enacted under Augustus, and at length repealed by Justinian. See Casaubon ad locum Vopisci.

ⁿ See the lives of Tacitus, Florianus, and Probus, in the Augustan History: we may be well assured, that whatever the soldier gave, the senator had already given.

CHAP. 3. To appoint the proconsuls and presidents of
 XII. the provinces, and to confer on all the magi-
 strates their civil jurisdiction. 4. To receive ap-
 peals through the intermediate office of the prefect
 of the city from all the tribupals of the empire.
 5. To give force and validity, by their decrees,
 to such as they should approve of the emperor's
 edicts. 6. To these several branches of auth-
 ority we may add some inspection over the fi-
 nances, since, even in the stern reign of Aure-
 lian, it was in their power to divert a part of
 the revenue from the public service.

Their joy
 and confi-
 dence.

Circular epistles were sent without delay to all the principal cities of the empire, Treves, Milan, Aquileia, Thessalonica, Corinth, Athens, Antioch, Alexandria, and Carthage, to claim their obedience, and to inform them of the happy revolution, which had restored the Roman senate to its ancient dignity. Two of these epistles are still extant. We likewise possess two very singular fragments of the private correspondence of the senators on this occasion. They discover the most excessive joy, and the most unbounded hopes. "Cast away your indolence," it is thus that one of the senators addresses his friend, "emerge from your retirements of Baiae and Puteoli. Give yourself to the city, to the senate. Rome flourishes, the whole republic flourishes. Thanks to the Roman army, to an army truly Roman; at length, we have re-

* Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216. The passage is perfectly clear; yet both Casaubon and Salmasius wish to correct it,

“ covered our just authority, the end of all our CHAP.
 “ desires. We hear appeals, we appoint pro- XII.
 “ consuls, we create emperors; perhaps too we
 “ may restrain them—to the wise, a word is suf-
 “ ficient.”² These lofty expectations were, how-
 ever, soon disappointed; nor, indeed, was it pos-
 sible that the armies and the provinces should
 long obey the luxurious and unwarlike nobles of
 Rome. On the slightest touch, the unsupported
 fabric of their pride and power fell to the ground.
 The expiring senate displayed a sudden lustre,
 blazed for a moment, and was extinguished for
 ever.

All that had yet passed at Rome was no more 4. p. 276.
 than a theatrical representation, unless it was ra-
 tified by the more substantial power of the le-
 gions. Leaving the senators to enjoy their dream
 of freedom and ambition, Tacitus proceeded to
 the Thracian camp, and was there, by the prae-
 torian prefect, presented to the assembled troops,
 as the prince whom they themselves had de-
 manded, and whom the senate had bestowed.
 As soon as the prefect was silent, the emperor
 addressed himself to the soldiers with eloquence
 and propriety. He gratified their avarice by a
 liberal distribution of treasure, under the names
 of pay and donative. He engaged their esteem
 by a spirited declaration, that although his age
 might disable him from the performance of mili-
 tary exploits, his counsels should never be un-

Tacitus is
 acknowledg'd by
 the army.

² Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 230, 232, 233. The senators ce-
 lebrated the happy restoration with hecatombs and public rejoicings.

CHAP. worthy of a Roman general, the successor of the
XII. brave Aurelian.⁴

The Alani invade Asia, and are repulsed by Tacitus. Whilst the deceased emperor was making preparations for a second expedition into the East, he had negotiated with the Alani, a Scythian people, who pitched their tents in the neighbourhood of the lake Mæotis. Those barbarians, allured by presents and subsidies, had promised to invade Persia with a numerous body of light cavalry. They were faithful to their engagements; but when they arrived on the Roman frontier, Aurclian was already dead, the design of the Persian war was at least suspended, and the generals, who, during their interrugnum, exercised a doubtful authority, were unprepared either to receive or to oppose them. Provoked by such treatment, which they considered as trifling and perfidious, the Alani had recourse to their own valour for their payment and revenge; and as they moved with the usual swiftness of Tartars, they had soon spread themselves over the provinces of Pontus, Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Galatia. The legions, who from the opposite shores of the Bosphorus could almost distinguish the flames of the cities and villages, impatiently urged their general to lead them against the invaders. The conduct of Tacitus was suitable to his age and station. He convinced the barbarians of the faith, as well as of the power, of the empire. Great numbers of the Alani, appeased by the punctual discharge of the engage-

ments which Aurelian had contracted with them, CHAP.
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relinquished their booty and captives, and quietly retreated to their own deserts, beyond the Phasis. Against the remainder who refused peace, the Roman emperor waged, in person, a successful war. Seconded by an army of brave and experienced veterans, in a few weeks he delivered the provinces of Asia from the terror of the Scythian invasion.

But the glory and life of Tacitus were of short duration. Transported, in the depth of winter, <sup>the empe-
ror Tacit.</sup> from the soft retirement of Campania to the foot ^{of} ^{the} ^{mount} Caucasus, he sunk under the unaccustomed hardships of a military life. The fatigues of the body were aggravated by the cares of the mind. For a while, the angry and selfish passions of the soldiers had been suspended by the enthusiasm of public virtue. They soon broke out with redoubled violence, and raged in the camp, and even in the tent, of the aged emperor. His mild and amiable character served only to inspire contempt; and he was incessantly tormented with factions which he could not assuage, and by demands which it was impossible to satisfy. Whatever flattering expectations he had conceived of reconciling the public disorders, Tacitus soon was convinced, that the licentiousness of the army

² Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 230. Zosimus, l. i. p. 57. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 637. Two passages in the life of Probus (p. 236, 238) convince me, that these Scythian invaders of Pontus were Alani. If we may believe Zosimus (l. i. p. 58), Florianus pursued them as far as the Cimmerian Bosphorus. But he had scarcely time for so long and difficult an expedition.

CHAP. XII. disdained the feeble restraint of laws; and his last hour was hastened by anguish and disappointment. It may be doubtful whether the soldiers imbrued their hands in the blood of this innocent prince.^s It is certain that their insolence was the cause of his death. He expired at Tyana in Cappadocia, after a reign of only six months and about twenty days.^t

^{a. d. 276, April 42.} The eyes of Tacitus were scarcely closed, before his brother Florianus shewed himself unworthy to reign, by the hasty usurpation of the purple, without expecting the approbation of the senate. The reverence for the Roman constitution, which yet influenced the camp and the provinces, was sufficiently strong to dispose them to censure, but not to provoke them to oppose, the precipitate ambition of Florianus. The discontent would have evaporated in idle murmurs, had not the general of the East, the heroic Probus, boldly declared himself the avenger of the senate. The contest, however, was still unequal; nor could the most able leader, at the head of the effeminate troops of Egypt and Syria, encounter, with any hopes of victory, the legions of Europe, whose irresistible strength appeared to support the brother of Tacitus. But the fortune

^s Eutropius and Aurelius Victor only say that he died; Victor Junior adds, that it was of a fever. Zosimus and Zonaras affirm, that he was killed by the soldiers. Vopiscus mentions both accounts, and seems to hesitate. Yet surely these jarring opinions are easily reconciled.

^t According to the two Victors, he reigned exactly two hundred days.

and activity of Probus triumphed over every obstacle. The hardy veterans of his rival, accustomed to cold climates, sickened and consumed away in the sultry heats of Cilicia, where the summer proved remarkably unwholesome. Their numbers were diminished by frequent desertion; the passes of the mountains were feebly defended; Tarsus opened its gates; and the soldiers of Florianus, when they had permitted him to enjoy the imperial title about three months, delivered the empire from civil war by the easy sacrifice of a ^{July} prince whom they despised.^u

The perpetual revolutions of the throne had so perfectly erased every notion of hereditary right, that the family of an unfortunate emperor was incapable of exciting the jealousy of his successors. The children of Tacitus and Florianus were permitted to descend into a private station, and to mingle with the general mass of the people. Their poverty indeed became an additional safeguard to their innocence. When Tacitus was elected by the senate, he resigned his ample patrimony to the public service,^x an act of generosity specious in appearance, but which evidently disclosed his intention of transmitting the empire to his descendants. The only consolation of their fallen state was the remembrance of transient

Their fa-
mily sub-
sists in ob-
scurity.

^u Hist. August, p. 231. Zosimus, l. i, p. 58, 59. Zonaras, l. xii, p. 637. Aurelius Victor says, that Probus assumed the empire in Illyricum; an opinion which (though adopted by a very learned man) would throw that period of history into inextricable confusion.

^x Hist. August, p. 229.

CHAP. greatness, and a distant hope, the child of a flattering prophecy, that, at the end of a thousand years, a monarch of the race of Tacitus should arise, the protector of the senate, the restorer of Rome, and the conqueror of the whole earth.¹

XII.
Character
and eleva-
tion of the
emperor
Probus.

The peasants of Illyricum, who had already given Claudius and Aurelian to the sinking empire, had an equal right to glory in the elevation of Probus.² Above twenty years before, the emperor Valerian, with his usual penetration, had discovered the rising merit of the young soldier, on whom he conferred the rank of tribune, long before the age prescribed by the military regulations. The tribune soon justified his choice, by a victory over a great body of Sarmatians, in which he saved the life of a near relation of Valerian; and deserved to receive from the emperor's hand the collars, bracelets, spears, and banners, the mural and the civic crown, and all the honourable rewards reserved by ancient Rome for successful valour. The third, and afterwards the tenth, legion were entrusted to the command of Probus, who, in every step of his promotion, shewed himself superior to the station which he filled. Africa and Pontus, the Rhine, the Danube, the Euphrates, and the Nile, by turns af-

¹ He was to send judges to the Parthians, Persians, and Sarmatians; a president to Taprobana; and a proconsul to the Roman island (supposed by Casaubon and Salmatius to mean Britain). Such a history as mine (says Vopiscus with proper modesty) will not subsist a thousand years to expose or justify the prediction.

² For the private life of Probus, see Vopiscus in *Hist. August.* p. 234-237.

forded him the most splendid occasions of displaying his personal prowess and his conduct in war. C H A P.
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Aurelian was indebted to him for the conquest of Egypt, and still more indebted for the honest courage with which he often checked the cruelty of his master, Tacitus, who desired by the abilities of his generals to supply his own deficiency of military talents, named him commander in chief of all the Eastern provinces, with five times the usual salary, the promise of the consulship, and the hope of a triumph. When Probus ascended the imperial throne, he was about forty-four years of age; ^a in the full possession of his fame, of the love of the army, and of a mature vigour of mind and body.

His acknowledged merit, and the success of his arms against Florianus, left him without an enemy or a competitor. Yet, if we may credit his respectful conduct to the senate, ^b he was far from being desirous of the empire, he had accepted it with the most sincere reluctance. “ But it is no longer in my power,” says Probus in a private letter, “ to lay down a title so full of envy and of danger. I must continue to personate the character which the soldiers have imposed upon me.” His dutiful address to the senate displayed the sentiments, or at least the language, of a Roman patriot: “ When you elected one of your order,

^a According to the Alexandrian Chronicle, he was fifty at the time of his death.

^b The letter was addressed to the praetorian prefect, whom (on condition of his good behaviour) he promised to continue in his great office. See Hist. August. p. 237.

CHAR. " conscript fathers ! to succeed the emperor Au-
 XII. " relian, you acted in a manner suitable to your
 " justice and wisdom ; for you are the legal
 " sovereigns of the world ; and the power which
 " you derive from your ancestors, will descend
 " to your posterity. Happy would it have been,
 " if Florianus, instead of usurping the purple of
 " his brother, like a private inheritance, had ex-
 " pected what your majesty might determine,
 " either in his favour, or in that of any other
 " person. The prudent soldiers have punished
 " his rashness. To me they have offered the
 " title of Augustus. But I submit to your cle-
 " mency my pretensions and my merits."

A. D. 276.
August 3.

When this respectful epistle was read by the consul, the senators were unable to disguise their satisfaction, that Probus should condescend thus humbly to solicit a sceptre which he already possessed. They celebrated with the warmest gratitude his virtues, his exploits, and above all his moderation. A decree immediately passed, without a dissenting voice, to ratify the election of the Eastern armies, and to confer on their chief all the several branches of the imperial dignity ; the names of Cæsar and Augustus, the title of father of his country, the right of making in the same day three motions in the senate,^a the office

^a Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 237. The date of the letter is as-
suredly faulty. Instead of *Non. Februar.* we may read *Non. August.*

^b Hist. August. p. 238. It is odd, that the senate should treat Probus less favourably than Marcus Antoninus. The prince had received, even before the death of Pius, *Jus quinto relations.* See Ca-
pitolin. in Hist. August. p. 24.

of Pontifex Maximus, the tribunitian power, and the proconsular command; a mode of investiture, which, though it seemed to multiply the authority of the emperor, expressed the constitution of the ancient republic. The reign of Probus corresponded with this fair beginning. The senate was permitted to direct the civil administration of the empire. Their faithful general asserted the honour of the Roman arms, and often laid at their feet crowns of gold and barbaric trophies, the fruits of his numerous victories.^e Yet, whilst he gratified their vanity, he must secretly have despised their indolence and weakness. Though it was every moment in their power to repeal the disgraceful edict of Gallienus, the proud successors of the Scipios patiently acquiesced in their exclusions from all military employments. They soon experienced, that those who refuse the sword, must renounce the sceptre.

The strength of Aurelian had crushed on every side the enemies of Rome. After his death they seemed to revive with an increase of fury and of numbers. They were again vanquished by the active vigour of Probus, who, in a short reign of about six years,^f equalled the fame of ancient heroes, and restored peace and order to every province of the Roman world. The dangerous

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^e See the dutiful letter of Probus to the senate, after his German victories. *Hist. August.* p. 239.

^f The date and duration of the reign of Probus are very correctly ascertained by Cardinal Norris in his learned work, *de Epochis Syro-Macedonum*, p. 96-105. A passage of Eusebius connects the second year of Probus with the eras of several of the Syrian cities.

CHAP. XII. frontier of Rhætia he so firmly secured, that he left it without the suspicion of an enemy. He broke the wandering power of the Sarmatian tribes; and by the terror of his arms compelled those barbarians to relinquish their spoil. The Gothic nation courted the alliance of so warlike an emperor.^s He attacked the Isaurians in their mountains, besieged and took several of their strongest castles,^h and flattered himself that he had for ever suppressed a domestic foe, whose independence so deeply wounded the majesty of the empire. The troubles excited by the usurper Firmus in the Upper Egypt had never been perfectly appeased; and the cities of Ptolemais and Coptos, fortified by the alliance of the Blemmyes, still maintained an obscure rebellion. The chastisement of those cities, and of their auxiliaries, the savages of the south, is said to have alarmed the court of Persia;^t and the great king sued in vain for the friendship of Probus. Most of the exploits which distinguished his reign, were achieved by the personal valour and conduct of the emperor, insomuch that the writer of his life expresses some amazement how, in so short a time, a single man could be present in so many distant wars. The remaining actions he entrusted to the care of his lieutenants, the judicious choice of

^s Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 239.

^h Zosimus (l. i. p. 62-65) tells a very long and trifling story of Lycius the Isaurian robber.

^t Zosim. l. i. p. 65. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 239, 240. But it seems incredible, that the defeat of the savages of Ethiopia could affect the Persian monarch.

whom forms no inconsiderable part of his glory. CHAP. XII.
 Carus, Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius, Galerius, Asclepiodatus, Annibalianus, and a crowd of other chiefs, who afterwards ascended or supported the throne, were trained to arms in the severe school of Aurelian and Probus.^k

But the most important service which Probus A. D. 277. rendered to the republic was the deliverance of Gaul from the invasion of the Germans, who, since the death of Aurelian, had ravaged that great province with impunity.^l Among the various multitude of those fierce invaders, we may distinguish, with some degree of clearness, three great armies, or rather nations, successively vanquished by the valour of Probus. He drove back the Franks into their morasses ; a descriptive circumstance from whence we may infer, that the confederacy known by the manly appellation of *Free*, already occupied the flat maritime country, intersected and almost overflowed by the stagnating waters of the Rhine, and that several tribes of the Frisians and Batavians had acceded to their alliance. He vanquished the Burgundians, a considerable people of the Vandalic race. They had wandered in quest of booty from the banks of the Oder to those of the Seine. They esteemed themselves sufficiently fortunate to purchase, by the restitution of all their booty, the permis-

^k Besides these well known chiefs, several others are named by Vopiscus (Hist. August. p. 241), whose actions have not reached our knowledge.

^l See the Cæsars of Julian, and Hist. August. p. 238, 240, 241.

CHAP. sion of an undisturbed retreat. They attempted
 XII. to elude that article of the treaty. Their punishment
 ***** was immediate and terrible.^m But of all
 the invaders of Gaul, the most formidable were
 the Lygians, a distant people who reigned over
 a wide domain on the frontiers of Poland and Silesia.ⁿ In the Lygian nation, the Arii held the
 first rank by their numbers and fierceness. "The
 " Arii (it is thus that they are described by the
 " energy of Tacitus) study to improve by art
 " and circumstances the innate terrors of their
 " barbarism. Their shields are black, their
 " bodies are painted black. They chuse for the
 " combat the darkest hour of the night. Their
 " host advances, covered as it were with a fune-
 " ral shade;^o nor do they often find an enemy
 " capable of sustaining so strange and infernal
 " an aspect. Of all our senses, the eyes are the
 " first vanquished in battle."^p Yet the arms
 and discipline of the Romans easily discomfited
 these horrid phantoms. The Lygii were defeated
 in a general engagement; and Semno, the most
 renowned of their chiefs, fell alive into the hands
 of Probus. That prudent emperor, unwilling to
 reduce a brave people to despair, granted them
 an honourable capitulation, and permitted them

^m Zosimus, l. i, p. 62. Hist. August. p. 240. But the latter supposes the punishment inflicted with the consent of their kings: if so, it was partial, like the offence.

ⁿ See Cluver. Germania Antiqua, l. iii. Ptolemy places in their country the city of Callista, probably Calish in Silesia.

^o *Ferale umbra* is the expression of Tacitus: it is surely a very bold one.

^p Tacit. Germania (c. 43).

to return in safety to their native country. But the losses which they suffered in the march, the battle, and the retreat, broke the power of the nation ; nor is the Lygian name ever repeated in the history either of Germany or of the empire. The deliverance of Gaul is reported to have cost the lives of four hundred thousand of the invaders ; a work of labour to the Romans, and of expence to the emperor, who gave a piece of gold for the head of every barbarian.⁴ But as the fame of warriors is built on the destruction of human kind, we may naturally suspect, that the sanguinary account was multiplied by the avarice of the soldiers, and accepted without any very severe examination by the liberal vanity of Probus.

Since the expedition of Maximin, the Roman generals had confined their ambition to a defensive war against the nations of Germany, who perpetually pressed on the frontiers of the empire. The more daring Probus pursued his Gallic victories, passed the Rhine, and displayed his invincible eagles on the banks of the Elbe and the Neckar. He was fully convinced, that nothing could reconcile the minds of the barbarians to peace, unless they experienced in their own country the calamities of war. Germany, exhausted by the ill success of the last emigration, was astonished by his presence. Nine of the most considerable princes repaired to his camp, and fell prostrate at his feet. Such a

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CHAP. XII. treaty was humbly received by the Germans, as it pleased the conqueror to dictate. He exacted a strict restitution of the effects and captives which they had carried away from the provinces; and obliged their own magistrates to punish the more obstinate robbers who presumed to detain any part of the spoil. A considerable tribute of corn, cattle, and horses, the only wealth of barbarians, was reserved for the use of the garrisons which Probus established on the limits of their territory. He even entertained some thoughts of compelling the Germans to relinquish the exercise of arms, and trust their differences to the justice, their safety to the power, of Rome. To accomplish these salutary ends, the constant residence of an imperial governor, supported by a numerous army, was indispensably requisite. Probus therefore judged it more expedient to defer the execution of so great a design; which was indeed rather of specious than solid utility.^r Had Germany been reduced into the state of a province, the Romans, with immense labour and expence, would have acquired only a more extensive boundary to defend against the fiercer and more active barbarians of Scythia.

He builds a wall from the Rhine to the Danube. Instead of reducing the warlike natives of Germany to the condition of subjects, Probus contented himself with the humble expedient of raising a bulwark against their inroads. The country, which now forms the circle of Swabia,

^r Hist. August. p. 238, 239. Vopiscus quotes a letter from the emperor to the senate, in which he mentions his design of reducing Germany into a province.

had been left desert in the age of Augustus by ^{CHAP.} XII. the emigration of its ancient inhabitants.^s The fertility of the soil soon attracted a new colony from the adjacent provinces of Gaul. Crowds of adventurers, of a roving temper and of desperate fortunes, occupied the doubtful possession, and acknowledged, by the payment of tythes, the majesty of the empire.^t To protect these new subjects, a line of frontier garrisons was gradually extended from the Rhine to the Danube. About the reign of Hadrian, when that mode of defence began to be practised, these garrisons were connected and covered by a strong intrenchment of trees and palisades. In the place of so rude a bulwark, the emperor Probus constructed a stone-wall of a considerable height, and strengthened it by towers at convenient distances. From the neighbourhood of Newstadt and Ratisbon on the Danube, it stretched across hills, vallies, rivers, and morasses, as far as Wimpfen on the Neckar, and at length terminated on the banks of the Rhine, after a winding course of near two hundred miles.^u This important barrier, uniting the two mighty streams that protected the provinces of Europe, seemed to fill up the vacant space through which

^s Strabo, I. vii. According to Velleius Paterculus (ii, 108), Marobodus led his Macromanni into Bohemia: Cluverius (German. Antiq. iii, 8) proves that it was from Swabia.

^t These settlers, from the payment of tythes, were denominated *Decumates*. Tacit. Germania, c. 29.

^u See Notes de l'Abbé de la Bleterie à la Germanie de Tacite, p. 183. His account of the wall is chiefly borrowed (as he says himself) from the *Alsatia Illustrata* of Schœpflin.

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the barbarians, and particularly the Alemanni, could penetrate with the greatest facility into the heart of the empire. But the experience of the world, from China to Britain, has exposed the vain attempt of fortifying an extensive tract of country.* An active enemy, who can select and vary his points of attack, must, in the end, discover some feeble spot, or some unguarded moment. The strength as well as the attention of the defenders is divided; and such are the blind effects of terror on the firmest troops, that a line broken in a single place is almost instantly deserted. The fate of the wall which Probus erected may confirm the general observation. Within a few years after his death, it was overthrown by the Alemanni. Its scattered ruins, universally ascribed to the power of the daemon, now serve only to excite the wonder of the Swabian peasant.

Introduction
and
settlement
of the bar-
barians.

Among the useful conditions of peace imposed by Probus on the vanquished nations of Germany, was the obligation of supplying the Roman army with sixteen thousand recruits, the bravest and most robust of their youth. The emperor dispersed them through all the provinces, and distributed this dangerous reinforcement in small bands of fifty or sixty each, among the

* See *Recherches sur les Chinois et les Egyptiens*, tom. ii, p. 81-102. The anonymous author is well acquainted with the globe in general, and with Germany in particular: with regard to the latter, he quotes a work of M. Hanselman; but he seems to confound the wall of Probus, designed against the Alemanni, with the fortification of the Mattiaci, constructed in the neighbourhood of Frankfort, against the Catti.

national troops; judiciously observing, that the aid which the republic derived from the barbarians should be felt but not seen.^y Their aid was now become necessary. The feeble elegance of Italy and the internal provinces could no longer support the weight of arms. The hardy frontier of the Rhine and Danube still produced minds and bodies equal to the labours of the camp; but a perpetual series of wars had gradually diminished their numbers. The infrequency of marriage, and the ruin of agriculture, affected the principles of population, and not only destroyed the strength of the present, but intercepted the hope of future, generations. The wisdom of Probus embraced a great and beneficial plan of replenishing the exhausted frontiers, by new colonies of captive or fugitive barbarians, on whom he bestowed lands, cattle, instruments of husbandry, and every encouragement that might engage them to educate a race of soldiers for the service of the republic. Into Britain, and most probably into Cambridgeshire,^z he transported a considerable body of Vandals. The impossibility of an escape reconciled them to their situation; and in the subsequent troubles of that island, they approved themselves the most faithful servants of the state.^a Great

^y He distributed about fifty or sixty barbarians to a *Numerus*, as it was then called; a corps, with whose established number we are not exactly acquainted.

^z Camden's Britannia, Introduction, p. 136; but he speaks from a very doubtful conjecture.

^a Zosimus, l. i. p. 62. According to Vopiscus, another body of Vandals was less faithful.

CHAP. numbers of Franks and Gepidæ were settled on
XII. the banks of the Danube and the Rhine. An
hundred thousand Bastarnæ, expelled from their
own country, cheerfully accepted an establish-
ment in Thrace, and soon imbibed the manners
and sentiments of Roman subjects.^b But the ex-
pectations of Probus were too often disappointed.
The impatience and idleness of the barbarians
could ill brook the slow labours of agriculture.
Their unconquerable love of freedom, rising
against despotism, provoked them into hasty re-
bellions, alike fatal to themselves and to the
provinces;^c nor could these artificial supplies,
however repeated by succeeding emperors, re-
store the important limit of Gaul and Illyricum
to its ancient and native vigour.

^a Daring en-
terprise of
the Franks. Of all the barbarians who abandoned their
new settlements, and disturbed the public tran-
quillity, a very small number returned to their
own country. For a short season they might
wander in arms through the empire; but in the
end they were surely destroyed by the power of
a warlike emperor. The successful rashness of
a party of Franks was attended, however, with
such memorable consequences, that it ought not
to be passed unnoticed. They had been esta-
blished by Probus on the sea-coast of Pontus,
with a view of strengthening the frontier against
the inroads of the Alani. A fleet, stationed in
one of the harbours of the Euxine, fell into the

^b Hist. August. p. 240. They were probably expelled by the Goths.
Zosim. l. i. p. 66.

^c Hist. August. p. 240.

hands of the Franks; and they resolved, through CHAP.
unknown seas, to explore their way from the XII.
mouth of the Phasis to that of the Rhine.
They easily escaped through the Bosphorus and
the Hellespont, and cruising along the Medi-
terranean, indulged their appetite for revenge
and plunder, by frequent descents on the un-
suspecting shores of Asia, Greece, and Africa.
The opulent city of Syracuse, in whose port
the navies of Athens and Carthage had formerly
been sunk, was sacked by a handful of barba-
rians, who massacred the greatest part of the
trembling inhabitants. From the island of Si-
cily, the Franks proceeded to the columns of
Hercules, trusted themselves to the ocean,
coasted round Spain and Gaul, and steering
their triumphant course through the British
channel, at length finished their surprising voy-
age, by landing in safety on the Batavian or
Frisian shores.⁴ The example of their success,
instructing their countrymen to conceive the ad-
vantages, and to despise the dangers, of the sea,
pointed out to their enterprising spirit a new
road to wealth and glory.

Notwithstanding the vigilance and activity of Probus, it was almost impossible that he could at once contain in obedience every part of his wide-extended dominions. The barbarians, who broke their chains, had seized the favourable opportunity of a domestic war. When the emperor marched to the relief of Gaul, he devolved the command

⁴ Panegyr. Vet. v, 18. Zosimus, l. i, p. 66.



CHAP. of the East on Saturninus. That general, a man
XII. of merit and experience, was driven into rebellion
by the absence of his sovereign, the levity
of the Alexandrian people, the pressing instances
of his friends, and his own fears ; but from the
moment of his elevation, he never entertained a
hope of empire, or even of life. "Alas!" he
said, "the republic has lost a useful servant, and
"the rashness of an hour has destroyed the ser-
"vices of many years. You know not," con-
tinued he, "the misery of sovereign power; a
"sword is perpetually suspended over our head.
"We dread our very guards, we distrust our
"companions. The choice of action or of re-
"pose is no longer in our disposition, nor is
"there any age, or character, or conduct, that
"can protect us from the censure of envy. In
"thus exalting me to the throne, you have
"doomed me to a life of cares, and to an un-
"timely fate. The only consolation which re-
"mains is the assurance that I shall not fall
"alone." But as the former part of his pre-
diction was verified by the victory, so the latter
was disappointed by the clemency, of Probus.
That amiable prince attempted even to save the
unhappy Saturninus from the fury of the soldiers.
He had more than once solicited the usurper
himself, to place some confidence in the mercy
of a sovereign who so highly esteemed his cha-
s. n. 279.

* Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 245, 246. The unfortunate orator
had studied rhetoric at Carthage, and was therefore more probably a
Moor (Zosim. l. i. p. 60) than a Gaul, as Vopiscus calls him.

racter, that he had punished, as a malicious in- CHAP.
former, the first who related the improbable news XII.
of his defection.^f Saturninus might, perhaps, have embraced the generous offer, had he not been restrained by the obstinate distrust of his adherents. Their guilt was deeper, and their hopes more sanguine, than those of their experienced leader.

The revolt of Saturninus was scarcely extin- A. D. 280,
guished in the East, before new troubles were of Bonosus
excited in the West, by the rebellion of Bonosus and Procu-
lus in Gaul.^g The most distinguished
merit of those two officers was their respective
prowess; of the one in the combats of Bacchus,
of the other in those of Venus;^h yet neither of
them were destitute of courage and capacity, and both sustained with honour the august character
which the fear of punishment had engaged them
to assume, till they sunk at length beneath the
superior genius of Probus. He used the victory
with his accustomed moderation, and spared the
fortunes as well as the lives of their innocent
families.^h

^f Zonaras, l. xii, p. 638.

^g A very surprising instance is recorded of the prowess of Proculus. He had taken one hundred Sarmatian virgins. The rest of the story he must relate in his own language: *Ex his una nocte decem invi; omnes tamen, quod in me erat, mulieres intra dies quindecim reddidi.* Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 246.

^h Proculus, who was a native of Albengue on the Genoese coast, armed two thousand of his own slaves. His riches were great, but they were acquired by robbery. It was afterwards a saying of his family, *Nec latrones esse, nec principes sibi placere.* Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 247.

CHAP.
XII.A. D. 281,
Triumph
of the em-
peror Pro-
bus,

The arms of Probus had now suppressed all the foreign and domestic enemies of the state. His mild but steady administration confirmed the re-establishment of the public tranquillity; nor was there left in the provinces a hostile barbarian, a tyrant, or even a robber, to revive the memory of past disorders. It was time that the emperor should revisit Rome, and celebrate his own glory and the general happiness. The triumph due to the valour of Probus was conducted with a magnificence suitable to his fortune; and the people who had so lately admired the trophies of Aurelian, gazed with equal pleasure on those of his heroic successor.¹ We cannot, on this occasion, forget the desperate courage of about four-score gladiators, reserved with near six hundred others, for the inhuman sports of the amphitheatre. Disdaining to shed their blood for the amusement of the populace, they killed their keepers, broke from the place of their confinement, and filled the streets of Rome with blood and confusion. After an obstinate resistance, they were overpowered and cut in pieces by the regular forces; but they obtained at least an honourable death, and the satisfaction of a just revenge.^k

His discip-
line.

The military discipline which reigned in the camps of Probus was less cruel than that of Aurelian, but it was equally rigid and exact. The latter had punished the irregularities of the soldiers with unrelenting severity; the former

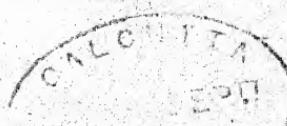
¹ Hist. August. p. 240.^k Zosim. l. i. p. 66.

prevented them by employing the legions in constant and useful labours. When Probus commanded in Egypt, he executed many considerable works for the splendour and benefit of that rich country. The navigation of the Nile, so important to Rome itself, was improved; and temples, bridges, porticoes, and palaces, were constructed by the hands of the soldiers, who acted by turns as architects, as engineers, and as husbandmen.¹ It was reported of Hannibal, that, in order to preserve his troops from the dangerous temptations of idleness, he had obliged them to form large plantations of olive trees along the coast of Africa.^m From a similar principle, Probus exercised his legions in covering, with rich vineyards, the hills of Gaul and Pannonia; and two considerable spots are described, which were entirely dug and planted by military labour.ⁿ One of these, known under the name of Mount Almo, was situated near Sirmium, the country where Probus was born, for which he ever retained a partial affection, and whose gratitude he endeavoured to secure, by converting into tillage a large and unhealthy tract of marshy ground. An army thus employed

¹ Hist. August. p. 236.

^m Aurel. Victor in Proh. But the policy of Hannibal, unnoticed by any more ancient writer, is irreconcileable with the history of his life. He left Africa when he was nine years old, returned to it when he was forty-five, and immediately lost his army in the decisive battle of Zama. Livius, xxx, 37.

ⁿ Hist. August. p. 240. Eutrop. ix, 17. Aurel. Victor in Proh. Victor Junior. He revoked the prohibition of Domitian, and granted a general permission of planting vines to the Gauls, the Britons, and the Pannonians.



CHAP. constituted perhaps the most useful, as well as
XII. the bravest, portion of Roman subjects.

His death. But in the prosecution of a favourite scheme, the best of men, satisfied with the rectitude of their intentions, are subject to forget the bounds of moderation; nor did Probus himself sufficiently consult the patience and disposition of his fierce legionaries.^o The dangers of the military profession seem only to be compensated by a life of pleasure and idleness; but if the duties of the soldier are incessantly aggravated by the labours of the peasant, he will at last sink under the intolerable burden, or shake it off with indignation. The imprudence of Probus is said to have inflamed the discontent of his troops. More attentive to the interests of mankind than to those of the army, he expressed the vain hope, that, by the establishment of universal peace, he should soon abolish the necessity of a standing and mercenary force.^p The unguarded expression proved fatal to him. In one of the hottest days of summer, as he severely urged the unwholesome labour of draining the marshes of Sirmium, the soldiers, impatient of fatigue, on a sudden threw down their tools, grasped their arms, and broke out into a furious mutiny. The emperor, conscious of his danger, took refuge in a lofty tower, constructed for the purpose of surveying the

^o Julian bestows a severe, and indeed excessive, censure on the rigour of Probus, who, as he thinks, almost deserved his fate.

^p Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 241. He lavishes on this idle hope a large stock of very foolish eloquence.

progress of the work.⁴ The tower was instantly forced, and a thousand swords were plunged at once into the bosom of the unfortunate Probus. The rage of the troops subsided as soon as it had been gratified. They then lamented their fatal rashness, forgot the severity of the emperor, whom they had massacred, and hastened to perpetuate, by an honourable monument, the memory of his virtues and victories.⁵

When the legions had indulged their grief and repentance for the death of Probus, their unanimous consent declared Carus, his praetorian prefect, the most deserving of the imperial throne. Every circumstance that relates to this prince appears of a mixed and doubtful nature. He gloried in the title of Roman citizen; and affected to compare the purity of *his* blood, with the foreign and even barbarous origin of the preceding emperors; yet the most inquisitive of his contemporaries, very far from admitting his claim, have variously deduced his own birth, or that of his parents, from Illyricum, from Gaul, or from Africa.⁶ Though a soldier, he had received a learned education; though a senator, he was invested with the first dignity of

CHAP.
XII.
A. D. 282,
August.

Election
and cha-
racter of
Carus.

⁴ *Turris ferrata.* It seems to have been a moveable tower, and armed with iron.

⁵ *Probus, et vere p̄ obus situs est: Victor omnium gentium Barbarum: victor etiam tyrannorum.*

⁶ Yet all this may be conciliated. He was born at Narbonne in Illyricum, confounded by Eutropius with the more famous city of that name in Gaul. His father might be an African, and his mother a noble Roman. Carus himself was educated in the capital. See Scaliger, *Animadversion. ad Euseb. Chron.* p. 241.

CHAP.
XII.

the army; and in an age, when the civil and military professions began to be irrecoverably separated from each other, they were united in the person of Carus. Notwithstanding the severe justice which he exercised against the assassins of Probus, to whose favour and esteem he was highly indebted, he could not escape the suspicion of being accessory to a deed from whence he derived the principal advantage. He enjoyed, at least before his elevation, an acknowledged character of virtue and abilities;^t but his austere temper insensibly degenerated into moroseness and cruelty; and the imperfect writers of his life almost hesitate whether they shall not rank him in the number of Roman tyrants.^u When Carus assumed the purple, he was about sixty years of age, and his two sons, Carinus and Numerian, had already attained the season of manhood.^v

The sentiments of the senate and people.

The authority of the senate expired with Probus; nor was the repentance of the soldiers displayed by the same dutiful regard for the civil power, which they had testified after the unfortunate death of Aurelian. The election of Carus was decided without expecting the approbation of the senate, and the new emperor contented

^t Probus had requested of the senate an equestrian statue and a marble palace, at the public expence, as a just recompence of the singular merit of Carus. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 249.

^u Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 242, 249. Julian excludes the emperor Carus and both his sons from the banquet of the Caesars.

^v John Malela, tom. i, p. 401. But the authority of that ignorant Greek is very slight. He ridiculously derives from Carus the city of Carrhae, and the province of Caria, the latter of which is mentioned by Homer.

himself with announcing, in a cold and stately epistle, that he had ascended the vacant throne.^y CHAP. XII.

A behaviour so very opposite to that of his amiable predecessor afforded no favourable presage of the new reign; and the Romans, deprived of power and freedom, asserted their privilege of licentious murmurs.^z The voice of congratulation and flattery was not however silent; and we may still peruse, with pleasure and contempt, an eclogue, which was composed on the accession of the emperor Carus. Two shepherds, avoiding the noon-tide heat, retire into the cave of Faunus. On a spreading beech they discover some recent characters. The rural deity had described, in prophetic verses, the felicity promised to the empire, under the reign of so great a prince. Faunus hails the approach of that hero, who, receiving on his shoulders the sinking weight of the Roman world, shall extinguish war and faction, and once again restore the innocence and security of the golden age.^a

It is more than probable, that these elegant trifles never reached the ears of a veteran general, Carus defeats the Sarmanians, and who, with the consent of the legions, was preparing to execute the long suspended design of marching into the East. Before his departure for this distant expedition, Carus conferred on his two sons, Carinus and Numerian, the title of Cæsar;

^y Hist. August. p. 249. Carus congratulated the senate, that one of their own order was made emperor.

^z Hist. August. p. 242.

^a See the first eclogue of Calphurnius. The design of it is preferred by Fontenelle to that of Virgil's Pollio. See tom. iii. p. 148.

CHAP. XII. and investing the former with almost an equal share of the imperial power, directed the young prince, first to suppress some troubles which had arisen in Gaul, and afterwards to fix the seat of his residence at Rome, and to assume the government of the western provinces.^b The safety of Illyricum was confirmed by a memorable defeat of the Sarmatians; sixteen thousand of those barbarians remained on the field of battle, and the number of captives amounted to twenty thousand. The old emperor, animated with the fame and prospect of victory, pursued his march, in the midst of winter, through the countries of Thrace and Asia Minor; and at length, with his younger son Numerian, arrived on the confines of the Persian monarchy. There, encamping on the summit of a lofty mountain, he pointed out to his troops the opulence and luxury of the enemy whom they were about to invade.

A. D. 283,
He gives
audience to
the Persian
ambassadors.

The successor of Artaxerxes, Varanes or Bahram, though he had subdued the Segestans, one of the most warlike nations of Upper Asia,^c was alarmed at the approach of the Romans, and endeavoured to retard their progress by a negotiation of peace. His ambassadors entered the camp about sun-set, at the time when the troops were satisfying their hunger with a frugal repast. The Persians expressed their desire of being introduced

^b Hist. August. p. 353. Eutropius, ix, 18. Pagi Annal.

^c Agathias, l. iv, p. 135. We find one of his sayings in the Bibliothèque Orientale of M. d'Herbelot. "The definition of humanity includes all other virtues."

to the presence of the Roman emperor. They were at length conducted to a soldier, who was seated on the grass. A piece of stale bacon and a few hard pease composed his supper. A coarse woollen garment of purple was the only circumstance that announced his dignity. The conference was conducted with the same disregard of courtly elegance. Carus taking off a cap which he wore to conceal his baldness, assured the ambassadors, that, unless their master acknowledged the superiority of Rome, he would speedily render Persia as naked of trees, as his own head was destitute of hair.^d Notwithstanding some traces of art and preparation, we may discover in this scene the manners of Carus, and the severe simplicity which the martial princes, who succeeded Gallienus, had already restored in the Roman camps. The ministers of the great king trembled and retired.

The threats of Carus were not without effect. He ravaged Mesopotamia, cut in pieces whatever opposed his passage, made himself master of the great cities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon (which seemed to have surrendered without resistance), and carried his victorious arms beyond the Tigris.^e He had seized the favourable moment for an invasion. The Persian councils were distracted by

His victories and extraordinary death.

^d Synesius tells this story of Carinus; and it is much more natural to understand it of Carus, than (as Petavius and Tillemont choose to do) of Probus.

^e Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 250. Eutropius, ix, 18, The two Victors.

CHAP. domestic factions, and the greater part of their
 XII. forces were detained on the frontiers of India.
 Rome and the East received with transport the
 news of such important advantages. Flattery
 and hope painted, in the most lively colours, the
 fall of Persia, the conquest of Arabia, the sub-
 mission of Egypt, and a lasting deliverance from
 the inroads of the Scythian nations.^f But the
 reign of Carus was destined to expose the vanity
 of predictions. They were scarcely uttered be-
 a. d. 283,
 Dec. 25. fore they were contradicted by his death; an
 event attended with such ambiguous circum-
 stances, that it may be related in a letter from
 his own secretary to the prefect of the city.
 "Carus," says he, "our dearest emperor, was
 "confined by sickness to his bed, when a furious
 "tempest arose in the camp. The darkness
 "which overspread the sky was so thick, that
 "we could no longer distinguish each other;
 "and the incessant flashes of lightning took from
 "us the knowledge of all that passed in the ge-
 "neral confusion. Immediately after the most
 "violent clap of thunder, we heard a sudden cry,
 "that the emperor was dead; and it soon ap-
 "peared, that his chamberlains, in a rage of
 "grief, had set fire to the royal pavilion, a cir-
 "cumstance which gave rise to the report that
 "Carus was killed by lightning. But, as far as

^f To the Persian victory of Carus, I refer the dialogue of the *Philopatris*, which has so long been an object of dispute among the learned. But to explain and justify my opinion would require a dissertation.

" we have been able to investigate the truth, his CHAP.
" death was the natural effect of his disorder."^g XII.

The vacancy of the throne was not productive of any disturbance. The ambition of the aspiring generals was checked by their mutual fears ; and young Numerian, with his absent brother Carinus, were unanimously acknowledged as Roman emperors. The public expected that the successor of Carus would pursue his father's footsteps, and without allowing the Persians to recover from their consternation, would advance sword in hand to the palaces of Susa and Ecbatana.^h But the legions, however strong in numbers and discipline, were dismayed by the most abject superstition. Notwithstanding all the arts that were practised to disguise the manner of the late emperor's death, it was found impossible to remove the opinion of the multitude ; and the power of opinion is irresistible. Places or persons struck with lightning were considered by the ancients with pious horror, as singularly devoted to the wrath of Heaven.ⁱ An oracle was remembered, which marked the river Tigris as the fatal boundary of the Roman arms. The troops, terrified with the fate of Carus and with their own danger, called aloud on young Numerian to obey the will of the gods, and to lead them away from

He is succeeded by his two sons, Carinus and Numerian.

^g Hist. August. p. 250. Yet Eutropius, Festus, Rufus, the two Victors, Jerome, Sidonius Apollinaris, Syncellus, and Zonaras, all ascribe the death of Carus to lightning.

^h See Nemesian. Cynegeticon, v. 71, &c.

ⁱ See Festus and his commentators, on the word *Scribonianum*. Places struck with lightning were surrounded with a wall, things were buried with mysterious ceremony.

CHAP. this inauspicious scene of war. The feeble emperor was unable to subdue their obstinate prejudice, and the Persians wondered at the unexpected retreat of a victorious enemy.^k

A. D. 384.
Vices of
Carinus.

XII. The intelligence of the mysterious fate of the late emperor was soon carried from the frontiers of Persia to Rome ; and the senate, as well as the provinces, congratulated the accession of the sons of Carus. These fortunate youths were strangers, however, to that conscious superiority, either of birth or of merit, which can alone render the possession of a throne easy, and as it were natural. Born and educated in a private station, the election of their father raised them at once to the rank of princes ; and his death, which happened about sixteen months afterwards, left them the unexpected legacy of a vast empire. To sustain with temper this rapid elevation, an uncommon share of virtue and prudence was requisite ; and Carinus, the elder of the brothers, was more than commonly deficient in those qualities. In the Gallic war, he discovered some degree of personal courage ; but from the moment of his arrival at Rome, he abandoned himself to the luxury of the capital, and to the abuse of his fortune. He was soft, yet cruel ; devoted to pleasure, but destitute of taste ; and though exquisitely susceptible of vanity, indifferent to the public esteem. In the course of a few months,

^k Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 250. Aurelius Victor seems to believe the prediction, and to approve the retreat.

^l Nemesian. Cynegeticon, v. 69. He was a contemporary, but a poet.

he successively married and divorced nine wives, CHAP.
XII. most of whom he left pregnant; and notwithstanding this legal inconstancy, found time to indulge such a variety of irregular appetites, as brought dishonour on himself and on the noblest houses of Rome. He beheld with inveterate hatred all those who might remember his former obscurity, or censure his present conduct. He banished, or put to death, the friends and counsellors whom his father had placed about him to guide his inexperienced youth; and he persecuted with the meanest revenge his school-fellows and companions, who had not sufficiently respected the latent majesty of the emperor. With the senators, Carinus affected a lofty and regal demeanour, frequently declaring, that he designed to distribute their estates among the populace of Rome. From the dregs of that populace, he selected his favourites, and even his ministers. The palace, and even the imperial table, was filled with singers, dancers, prostitutes, and all the various retinue of vice and folly. One of his door-keepers^m he intrusted with the government of the city. In the room of the praetorian prefect, whom he put to death, Carinus substituted one of the ministers of his looser pleasures. Another who possessed the same, or even a more infamous, title to favour, was invested with the consulship. A confidential secretary, who had

^m *Cancellarius.* This word, so humble in its origin, has by a singular fortune risen into the title of the first great office of state in the monarchies of Europe. See Casaubon and Salmasius, ad Hist. August. p. 253.

CHAP. XII. acquired uncommon skill in the art of forgery, delivered the indolent emperor, with his own consent, from the irksome duty of signing his name.

When the emperor Carus undertook the Persian war, he was induced, by motives of affection as well as policy, to secure the fortunes of his family, by leaving in the hands of his eldest son the armies and provinces of the West. The intelligence which he soon received of the conduct of Carinus filled him with shame and regret; nor had he concealed his resolution of satisfying the republic by a severe act of justice, and of adopting, in the place of an unworthy son, the brave and virtuous Constantius, who at that time was governor of Dalmatia. But the elevation of Constantius was for a while deferred; and as soon as the father's death had released Carinus from the controul of fear or decency, he displayed to the Romans the extravagancies of Elagabalus, aggravated by the cruelty of Domitian.¹⁹

He cele-
brates the
Roman
games.

The only merit of the administration of Carinus that history could record or poetry celebrate, was the uncommon splendour with which, in his own and his brother's name, he exhibited the Roman games of the theatre, the circus, and the amphitheatre. More than twenty years afterwards, when the courtiers of Diocletian represented to their frugal sovereign the fame and po-

¹⁹ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 253, 254. Eutropius, ix, 19. Victor Junior. The reign of Diocletian indeed was so long and prosperous that it must have been very unfavourable to the reputation of Carinus.

pularity of his munificent predecessor, he acknowledged, that the reign of Carinus had indeed been a reign of pleasure.¹ But this vain prodigality, which the prudence of Diocletian might justly despise, was enjoyed with surprise and transport by the Roman people. The oldest of the citizens, recollecting the spectacles of former days, the triumphal pomp of Probus or Aurelian, and the secular games of the emperor Philip, acknowledged that they were all surpassed by the superior magnificence of Carinus.²

The spectacles of Carinus may therefore be best illustrated by the observation of some particulars, which history has condescended to relate concerning those of his predecessors. If we confine ourselves solely to the hunting of wild beasts, however we may censure the vanity of the design or the cruelty of the execution, we are obliged to confess, that neither before nor since the time of the Romans, so much art and expence have ever been lavished for the amusement of the people.³ By the order of Probus, a great quantity of large trees, torn up by the roots, were transplanted into the midst of the circus. The spacious and shady forest was immediately filled with a thousand ostriches, a thousand stags, a

¹ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 254. He calls him Carus, but the sense is sufficiently obvious, and the words were often confounded.

² See Calphurnius, Eclog. vii. 43. We may observe, that the spectacles of Probus were still recent, and that the poet is seconded by the historian.

³ The philosopher Montaigne (Essais, I. iii, 6) gives a very just and lively view of Roman magnificence in these spectacles.

CHAP. thousand fallow deer, and a thousand wild boars; XII. and all this variety of game was abandoned to the riotous impetuosity of the multitude. The tragedy of the succeeding day consisted in the massacre of an hundred lions, an equal number of lionesses, two hundred leopards, and three hundred bears.² The collection prepared by the younger Gordian for his triumph, and which his successor exhibited in the secular games, was less remarkable by the number than by the singularity of the animals. Twenty zebras displayed their elegant forms and variegated beauties to the eyes of the Roman people.³ Ten elks, and as many camelopards, the loftiest and most harmless creatures that wander over the plains of Sarmatia and *Aethiopia*, were contrasted with thirty African hyænas, and ten Indian tygers, the most implacable savages of the torrid zone. The unoffending strength with which nature has endowed the greater quadrupeds was admired in the rhinoceros, the hippopotamus of the Nile,⁴ and a majestic troop of thirty-two elephants.⁵ While the populace gazed with stupid wonder on

² Vopiscus, in Hist. August. p. 240.

³ They are called *Onagri*; but the number is too inconsiderable for mere wild asses. Cupet (de Elephantis Exercitat. ii, 7) has proved from Oppian, Dion, and an anonymous Greek, that zebras had been seen at Rome. They were brought from some island of the ocean, perhaps Madagascar.

⁴ Carinus gave an hippopotamus (See Calphurn. Eclog. vii, 66). In the latter spectacles, I do not recollect any crocodiles, of which Augustus once exhibited thirty-six.—Dion Cassius, l. lv, p. 781.

⁵ Capitolin. in Hist. August. p. 164, 165. We are not acquainted with the animals which he calls *archeontes*; some read *argoleontes*, others *agrioleontes*; both corrections are very nugatory.

the splendid show, the naturalist might indeed ob- CHAP.
serve the figure and properties of so many different XII.
species, transported from every part of the ancient world into the amphitheatre of Rome. But this accidental benefit, which science might derive from folly, is surely insufficient to justify such a wanton abuse of the public riches. There occurs, however, a single instance in the first Punic war, in which the senate wisely connected this amusement of the multitude with the interest of the state. A considerable number of elephants, taken in the defeat of the Carthaginian army, were driven through the circus by a few slaves, armed only with blunt javelins.^x The useful spectacle served to impress the Roman soldier with a just contempt for those unwieldy animals; and he no longer dreaded to encounter them in the ranks of war.

The hunting or exhibition of wild beasts was conducted with a magnificence suitable to a people who styled themselves the masters of the world; nor was the edifice appropriated to that entertainment less expressive of Roman greatness. Posterity admires, and will long admire, the awful remains of the amphitheatre of Titus, which so well deserved the epithet of colossal.^y It was a building of an elliptic figure, five hundred and sixty-four feet in length, and four hundred and sixty seven in breadth, founded on fourscore arches, and rising, with four successive orders of architecture, to the height of one hundred and

^x Plin. *Hist. Natur.* viii, 6, from the annals of Piso.

^y See Maffei, *Verona Illustrata*, p. iv, l. i, c. 2.

CHAP.
XII.

forty feet.^a The outside of the edifice was encrusted with marble, and decorated with statues. The slopes of the vast concave, which formed the inside, were filled and surrounded with sixty or eighty rows of seats of marble, likewise covered with cushions, and capable of receiving with ease above fourscore thousand spectators.^a Sixty-four *vomitories* (for by that name the doors were very aptly distinguished) poured forth the immense multitude; and the entrances, passages, and stair-cases, were contrived with such exquisite skill, that each person, whether of the senatorial, the equestrian, or the plebeian order, arrived at his destined place without trouble or confusion.^b Nothing was omitted which, in any respect, could be subservient to the convenience and pleasure of the spectators. They were protected from the sun and rain by an ample canopy, occasionally drawn over their heads. The air was continually refreshed by the playing of fountains, and profusely impregnated by the grateful scent of aromatics. In the centre

^a Maffei, I. ii, c. 2. The height was very much exaggerated by the ancients. It reached almost to the heavens, according to Calphurnius (Eclog. vii, 23), and surpassed the ken of human sight according to Amnianus Marcellinus (xvi, 10). Yet how trifling to the great pyramid of Egypt, which rises 500 feet perpendicular!

^b According to different copies of Victor, we read 77,000 or 87,000 spectators; but Maffei (I. ii, c. 12) finds room on the open seats for no more than 34,000. The remainder were contained in the upper covered galleries.

^b See Maffei, I. ii, c. 5-12. He treats the very difficult subject with all possible clearness, and like an architect, as well as an antiquarian.

of the edifice, the *arena*, or stage, was strewed with the finest sand, and successively assumed the most different forms. At one moment it seemed to rise out of the earth, like the garden of the Hesperides, and was afterwards broken into the rocks and caverns of Thrace. The subterraneous pipes conveyed an inexhaustible supply of water; and what had just before appeared a level plain might be suddenly converted into a wide lake, covered with armed vessels, and replenished with the monsters of the deep.^c In the decorations of these scenes, the Roman emperors displayed their wealth and liberality; and we read on various occasions, that the whole furniture of the amphitheatre consisted either of silver, or of gold, or of amber.^d The poet who describes the games of Carinus, in the character of a shepherd attracted to the capital by the fame of their magnificence, affirms, that the nets designed as a defence against the wild beasts, were of gold wire; that the porticoes were gilded, and that the *belt* or circle which divided the several ranks of spectators from each other, was studded with a precious Mosaic of beautiful stones.^e

In the midst of this glittering pageantry, the emperor Carinus, secure of his fortune, enjoyed

^{a. p. 284,}
Sept. 12.

• Calphurn. Eclog. vii, 64, 73. These lines are curious, and the whole Eclogue has been of infinite use to Maffei. Calphurnius, as well as Martial (see his first book), was a poet; but when they described the amphitheatre, they both wrote from their own senses, and to those of the Romans.

^d Consult Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxiii, 16, xxxvii, 11.

• Balteus en gemmis, en in lita porticus auro.

Certatim radiant, &c. Calphurn. vii.

CHAP.
XII.

the acclamations of the people, the flattery of his courtiers, and the songs of the poets, who, for want of a more essential merit, were reduced to celebrate the divine graces of his person.^f In the same hour, but at the distance of nine hundred miles from Rome, his brother expired; and a sudden revolution transferred into the hands of a stranger the sceptre of the house of Carus.^g

Return of
Numerian
with the
army from
Persia.

The sons of Carus never saw each other after their father's death. The arrangements which their new situation required were probably deferred till the return of the younger brother to Rome, where a triumph was decreed to the young emperors, for the glorious success of the Persian war.^h It is uncertain whether they intended to divide between them the administration or the provinces of the empire; but it is very unlikely that their union would have proved of any long duration. The jealousy of power must have been inflamed by the opposition of characters. In the most corrupt of times, Carinus was unworthy to live; Numerian deserved to reign in a happier period. His affable manners and gentle virtues secured him, as soon as they became known, the regard and affections of the public. He possessed

^f *Et Martis vultus et Apollinis esse putavi*, says Calphurnius: but John Malela, who had perhaps seen pictures of Carinus, describes him as thick, short, and white, tom. i, p. 403.

^g With regard to the time when these Roman games were celebrated, Scaliger, Salmasius, and Cuper, have given themselves a great deal of trouble to perplex a very clear subject.

^h Nemesianus (in the *Cynegeticons*) seems to anticipate in his fancy that auspicious day.

the elegant accomplishments of a poet and orator, which dignify as well as adorn the humblest and the most exalted station. His eloquence, however it was applauded by the senate, was formed not so much on the model of Cicero, as on that of the modern declaimers; but in an age very far from being destitute of poetical merit, he contended for the prize with the most celebrated of his contemporaries, and still remained the friend of his rivals; a circumstance which evinces either the goodness of his heart or the superiority of his genius.¹ But the talents of Numerian were rather of the contemplative, than of the active kind. When his father's elevation reluctantly forced him from the shade of retirement, neither his temper nor his pursuits had qualified him for the command of armies. His constitution was destroyed by the hardships of the Persian war; and he had contracted, from the heat of the climate,² such a weakness in his eyes, as obliged him, in the course of a long retreat, to confine himself to the solitude and darkness of a tent or litter. The administration of all affairs, civil as well as military, was devolved on Arrius Aper, the praetorian prefect; who, to the power of his important office, added the honour of being father-in-law to Numerian. The imperial

¹ He won all the crowns from Nemesianus, with whom he vied in didactic poetry. The senate erected a statue to the son of Carus, with a very ambiguous inscription, “ To the most powerful of orators.” See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 251.

² A more natural cause, at least, than that assigned by Vopiscus (Hist. August. p. 251), incessantly weeping for his father's death.

CHAP. pavilion was strictly guarded by his most trusty
 XII. adherents; and during many days, Aper delivered
 to the army the supposed mandates of their in-
 visible sovereign.¹

Death of
Numerian.

It was not till eight months after the death of Carus, that the Roman army, returning by slow marches from the banks of the Tigris, arrived on those of the Thracian Bosphorus. The legions halted at Chalcedon in Asia, while the court passed over to Heraclea, on the European side of the Propontis.^m But a report soon circulated through the camp, at first in secret whispers, and at length in loud clamours, of the emperor's death, and of the presumption of his ambitious minister, who still exercised the sovereign power in the name of a prince who was no more. The impatience of the soldiers could not long support a state of suspense. With rude curiosity they broke into the imperial tent, and discovered only the corpse of Numerian.ⁿ The gradual decline of his health might have induced them to believe that his death was natural; but the concealment was interpreted as an evidence of guilt; and the measures which Aper had taken to secure his election became the immediate

¹ In the Persian war, Aper was suspected of a design to betray Carus. Hist. August. p. 250.

^m We are obliged to the Alexandrian Chronicle, p. 274, for the knowledge of the time and place where Diocletian was elected emperor.

ⁿ Hist. August. p. 251. Eutrop. ix. 88. Hieronym. in Chron. According to these judicious writers, the death of Numerian was discovered by the stench of his dead body. Could no aromatics be found in the imperial household?

occasion of his ruin. Yet, even in the transport ^{CHAP.} _{XII.} of their rage and grief, the troops observed a regular proceeding, which proves how firmly discipline had been re-established by the martial successors of Gallienus. A general assembly of the army was appointed to be held at Chalcedon, whither Aper was transported in chains, as a prisoner and a criminal. A vacant tribunal was erected in the midst of the camp, and the generals and tribunes formed a great military council.

They soon announced to the multitude, that their ^{A. D. 284,} _{Sept. 17.} choice had fallen on Diocletian, commander of ^{Election of} the domestics or body-guards, as the person ^{the empe-} _{or Diocle-} most capable of revenging and succeeding their beloved emperor.

The future fortunes of the candidate depended on the chance or conduct of the present hour. Conscious that the station which he had filled exposed him to some suspicions, Diocletian ascended the tribunal, and raising his eyes towards the sun, made a solemn profession of his own innocence, in the presence of that all-seeing Deity.^{*} Then, assuming the tone of a sovereign and a judge, he commanded that Aper should be brought in chains to the foot of the tribunal. "This man," said he, "is the murderer of Numerian;" and without giving him time to enter on a dangerous justification, drew his sword, and buried it in the breast of the unfortunate prefect. A charge supported by such decisive proof, was admitted without contradiction, and the legions, with re-

* Aurel. Victor. Eutropius, ix, 20. Hieronym. in Chron.

CHAP.
XII.Defeat and
death of
Carinus.A. D. 285,
May.

peated acclamations, acknowledged the justice and authority of the emperor Diocletian.^p

Before we enter upon the memorable reign of that prince, it will be proper to punish and dismiss the unworthy brother of Numerian. Carinus possessed arms and treasures sufficient to support his legal title to the empire. But his personal vices overbalanced every advantage of birth and situation. The most faithful servants of the father despised the incapacity, and dreaded the cruel arrogance, of the son. The hearts of the people were engaged in favour of his rival; and even the senate was inclined to prefer an usurper to a tyrant. The arts of Diocletian inflamed the general discontent; and the winter was employed in secret intrigues and open preparations for a civil war. In the spring, the forces of the East and of the West encountered each other in the plains of Margus, a small city of Mæsia, in the neighbourhood of the Danube.^q The troops, so lately returned from the Persian war, had acquired their glory at the expence of health and numbers; nor were they in a condition to contend with the unexhausted strength of the legions of Europe. Their ranks were broken, and, for a moment, Diocletian

^p Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 252. The reason why Diocletian killed *Aper* (a wild boar), was founded on a prophecy and a pun, as foolish as they are well known.

^q Eutropius marks its situation very accurately: it was between the mons Aureus and Viminacium. M. d'Anville (Geographie Ancienne, tom. i, p. 304) places Margus at Kastolatz in Servia, a little below Belgrade and Semendria.

despaired of the purple and of life. But the advantage which Carinus had obtained by the valour of his soldiers, he quickly lost by the infidelity of his officers. A tribune, whose wife he had seduced, seized the opportunity of revenge, and by a single blow extinguished civil discord in the blood of the adulterer.^r

^r Hist. August. p. 254. Eutropius, p. ix, 20. Aurelius Victor, Victor in Epitome.

CHAP. XIII.

The reign of Diocletian and his three associates, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius.—General re-establishment of order and tranquillity.—The Persian war, victory, and triumph.—The new form of administration.—Abdication and retirement of Diocletian and Maximian.

CHAP.
XIII.

Elevation
and charac-
ter of Dio-
cletian,
s. d. 285.

As the reign of Diocletian was more illustrious than that of any of his predecessors, so was his birth more abject and obscure. The strong claims of merit and of violence had frequently superseded the ideal prerogatives of nobility; but a distinct line of separation was hitherto preserved between the free and the servile part of mankind. The parents of Diocletian had been slaves in the house of Annulinus, a Roman senator; nor was he himself distinguished by any other name than that which he derived from a small town in Dalmatia, from which his mother deduced her origin.* It is, however, probable, that his father obtained the freedom of the family, and that he soon acquired an office of scribe, which was commonly exer-

* Eutrop. ix, 19. Victor in Epitom. The town seems to have been properly called Doclia, from a small tribe of Illyrians (see Cellarius, Geograph. Antiqua, tom. i, p. 393); and the original name of the fortunate slave was probably Docles: he first lengthened it to the Grecian harmony of Diocles, and at length to the Roman majesty of Diocletianus. He likewise assumed the patrician name of Valerius, and it is usually given him by Aurelius Victor.

cised by persons of his condition.^b Favourable CHAP.
oracles, or rather the consciousness of superior XIX.
merit, prompted his aspiring son to pursue the
profession of arms and the hopes of fortune; and
it would be extremely curious to observe the
gradation of arts and accidents which enabled
him in the end to fulfil those oracles, and to dis-
play that merit to the world. Diocletian was
successively promoted to the government of Mæ-
sia, the honours of the consulship, and the im-
portant command of the guards of the palace.
He distinguished his abilities in the Persian war;
and, after the death of Numerian, the slave, by
the confession and judgment of his rivals, was
declared the most worthy of the imperial throne.
The malice of religious zeal, whilst it arraigns
the savage fierceness of his colleague Maximian,
has affected to cast suspicions on the personal
courage of the emperor Diocletian.^c It would
not be easy to persuade us of the cowardice of a
soldier of fortune, who acquired and preserved
the esteem of the legions, as well as the favour
of so many warlike princes. Yet even calumny
is sagacious enough to discover and to attack
the most vulnerable part. The valour of Dio-
cletian was never found inadequate to his duty,
or to the occasion; but he appears not to have

^b See Dacier on the sixth satire of the second book of Horace. Cornel. Nepos, in Vit. Eumen. c. 1.

^c Lactantius (or whoever was the author of the little treatise *De Mortibus Persecutorum*) accuses Diocletian of *timidity* in two places, c. 7, 8. In chap. ix, he says of him, “erat in omni tumultu metuens, *timidus* et animi *disjectus*.”

CHAP. XIII. possessed the daring and generous spirit of a hero, who courts danger and fame, despairs artifice, and boldly challenges the allegiance of his equals. His abilities were useful rather than splendid; a vigorous mind, improved by the experience and study of mankind; dexterity and application in business; a judicious mixture of liberality and economy, of mildness and rigour; profound dissimulation under the disguise of military frankness; steadiness to pursue his ends; flexibility to vary his means; and, above all, the great art of submitting his own passions, as well as those of others, to the interest of his ambition, and of colouring his ambition with the most specious pretences of justice and public utility. Like Augustus, Diocletian may be considered as the founder of a new empire. Like the adopted son of Cæsar, he was distinguished as a statesman rather than as a warrior; nor did either of those princes employ force, whenever their purpose could be effected by policy.

His clemency and victory.

The victory of Diocletian was remarkable for its singular mildness. A people accustomed to applaud the clemency of the conqueror, if the usual punishments of death, exile, and confiscation, were inflicted with any degree of temper and equity, beheld, with the most pleasing astonishment a civil war, the flames of which were extinguished in the field of battle. Diocletian received into his confidence Aristobulus, the principal minister of the house of Carus, respected the lives, the fortunes, and the dignity, of his adversaries, and even continued in their respec-

tive stations the greater number of the servants of Carinus.^a It is not improbable that motives of prudence might assist the humanity of the artful Dalmatian: of these servants, many had purchased his favour by secret treachery; in others, he esteemed their grateful fidelity to an unfortunate master. The discerning judgment of Aurelian, of Probus, and of Carus, had filled the several departments of the state and army with officers of approved merit, whose removal would have injured the public service, without promoting the interest of the successor. Such a conduct, however, displayed to the Roman world the fairest prospect of the new reign; and the emperor affected to confirm this favourable pre- possession, by declaring, that, among all the virtues of his predecessors, he was the most ambitious of imitating the humane philosophy of Marcus Antoninus.^e

CHAP.
XIII.

The first considerable action of his reign seemed to evince his sincerity as well as his moderation. After the example of Marcus, he gave himself a colleague in the person of Maximian, on whom he bestowed at first the title of Cæsar, and afterwards that of Augustus.^f But the

Association
and cha-
racter of
Maximian,
A. D. 286,
April 1.

^a In this encomium, Aurelius Victor seems to convey a just, though indirect, censure of the cruelty of Constantinus. It appears from the Fasti, that Aristobulus remained prefect of the city, and that he ended with Diocletian the consulship which he had commenced with Carinus.

^e Aurelius Victor styles Diocletian, “ Parentem potius quam do-
“ minum.” See August. p. 30.

^f The question of the time when Maximian received the honours of Cæsar and Augustus has divided modern critics, and given occa-
sion

CHAP. XIII. motives of his conduct, as well as the object of his choice, were of a very different nature from those of his admired predecessor. By investing a luxurious youth with the honours of the purple, Marcus had discharged a debt of private gratitude, at the expence, indeed, of the happiness of the state. By associating a friend and a fellow-soldier to the labours of government, Diocletian, in a time of public danger, provided for the defence both of the East and of the West. Maximian was born a peasant, and, like Aurelian, in the territory of Sirmium. Ignorant of letters, ^g careless of laws, the rusticity of his appearance and manners still betrayed in the most elevated fortune the meanness of his extraction. War was the only art which he professed. In a long course of service he had distinguished himself on every frontier of the empire; and though his military talents were formed to obey rather than to command, though, perhaps, he never attained the skill of a consummate general, he was capable, by his valour, constancy, and experience, of executing the most

sion to a great deal of learned wrangling. I have followed M. de Tillemont (*Histoire des Empereurs*, tom. iv, p. 500-505), who has weighed the several reasons and difficulties with his scrupulous accuracy.

^g In an oration delivered before him (*Panegyr. Vet. ii, 8*), Mænnerius expresses a doubt, whether his hero, in imitating the conduct of Hannibal and Scipio, had ever heard of their names. From thence we may fairly infer, that Maximian was more desirous of being considered as a soldier than as a man of letters; and it is in this manner that we can often translate the language of flattery into that of truth.

arduous undertakings. Nor were the vices of CHAP.
XIII. Maximian less useful to his benefactor. In-
sensible to pity, and fearless of consequences,
he was the ready instrument of every act of
cruelty which the policy of that artful prince
might at once suggest and disclaim. As soon
as a bloody sacrifice had been offered to pru-
dence or to revenge, Diocletian, by his season-
able intercession, saved the remaining few whom
he had never designed to punish, gently cen-
sured the severity of his stern colleague, and
enjoyed the comparison of a golden and an iron
age, which was universally applied to their op-
posite maxims of government. Notwithstand-
ing the difference of their characters, the two
emperors maintained, on the throne, that friend-
ship which they had contracted in a private
station. The haughty turbulent spirit of Max-
imian, so fatal afterwards to himself and to the
public peace, was accustomed to respect the
genius of Diocletian, and confessed the ascend-
ant of reason over brutal violence.^a From a
motive either of pride or superstition, the two
emperors assumed the titles, the one of Jovius,
the other of Herculius. Whilst the motion of
the world (such was the language of their
venal orators) was maintained by the all-see-
ing wisdom of Jupiter, the invincible arm of

^a Lactantius de M. P. c. 8. Aurelius Victor. As among the panegyrics, we find orations pronounced in praise of Maximian, and others, which flatter his adversaries at his expence, we derive some knowledge from the contrast.

CHAP. Hercules purged the earth from monsters and
XIII. tyrants.¹

Association
of two Cæ-
sars, Gale-
rius and
Constan-
tius,
A. D. 292,
March 1.

But even the omnipotence of Jovius and Herculius was insufficient to sustain the weight of the public administration. The prudence of Diocletian discovered, that the empire, assailed on every side by the barbarians, required on every side the presence of a great army, and of an emperor. With this view, he resolved once more to divide his unwieldy power, and with the inferior title of *Cæsars*, to confer on two generals of approved merit an equal share of the sovereign authority.^k Galerius, surnamed Armentarius, from his original profession of a herdsman, and Constantius, who from his pale complexion had acquired the denomination of Chlorus,^l were the two persons invested with the second honours of the imperial purple. In describing the country, extraction, and manners of Herculius, we have already delineated those of Galerius, who was often, and not improperly, styled the younger Maximian, though, in many instances, both of virtue and ability, he appears to have possessed a manifest superiority over the elder. The birth of Constantius was less obscure

¹ See the second and third panegyrics, particularly iii, 3, 10, 14; but it would be tedious to copy the diffuse and affected expressions of their false eloquence. With regard to the titles, consult Aurel. Victor, Lactantius de M. P. c. 52. Spanheim de Usu Numismatum, &c. Dissertat. xii, 8.

^k Aurelius Victor. Victor in Epitome. Eutrop. ix, 22. Lactant. de M. P. c. 8. Hieronym. in Chron.

^l It is only among the modern Greeks that Tillemont can discover his appellation of Chlorus. Any remarkable degree of paleness seems inconsistent with the *rubor* mentioned in Panegyric v, 19.

than that of his colleagues. Eutropius, his father, was one of the most considerable nobles of Dardania, and his mother was the niece of the emperor Claudius.^m Although the youth of Constantius had been spent in arms, he was endowed with a mild and amiable disposition, and the popular voice had long since acknowledged him worthy of the rank which he at last attained. To strengthen the bonds of political, by those of domestic, union, each of the emperors assumed the character of a father to one of the Cæsars; Diocletian to Galerius, and Maximian to Constantius; and each obliging them to repudiate their former wives, bestowed his daughter in marriage on his adopted son.ⁿ These four princes distributed among themselves the wide extent of the Roman empire. The defence of Gaul, Spain,^o and Britain, was intrusted to Constantius; Galerius was stationed on the banks of the Danube, as the safeguard of the Illyrian provinces; Italy and Africa were considered as the department of Maximian; and for his peculiar portion, Diocletian reserved Thrace, Egypt, and the rich countries of Asia. Every one was

CHAP.
XIII.

Depart-
ments and
harmony of
the four
princes.

^m Julian, the grandson of Constantius, boasts that his family was derived from the warlike Mæsians. *Misopogon*, p. 348. The Dardanians dwelt on the edge of Mæsia.

ⁿ Galerius married Valeria, the daughter of Diocletian: if we speak with strictness, Theodora, the wife of Constantius, was daughter only to the wife of Maximian. *Spanheim Dissertat.* xi, 2.

^o This division agrees with that of the four prefectures; yet there is some reason to doubt whether Spain was not a province of Maximian. See *Tillemont*, tom. iv, p. 517.]

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XIII.

sovereign within his own jurisdiction ; but their united authority extended over the whole monarchy ; and each of them was prepared to assist his colleagues with his counsels or presence. The Cæsars, in their exalted rank, revered the majesty of the emperors ; and the three younger princes invariably acknowledged, by their gratitude and obedience, the common parent of their fortunes. The suspicious jealousy of power found not any place among them ; and the singular happiness of their union has been compared to a chorus of music, whose harmony was regulated and maintained by the skilful hand of the first artist.^p

Series of
events.

This important measure was not carried into execution till about six years after the association of Maximian ; and that interval of time had not been destitute of memorable incidents. But we have preferred, for the sake of perspicuity, first to describe the more perfect form of Diocletian's government, and afterwards to relate the actions of his reign, following rather the natural order of the events, than the dates of a very doubtful chronology.

A. D. 287,
State of the
peasants of
Gaul.

The first exploit of Maximian, though it is mentioned in a few words by our imperfect writers, deserves, from its singularity, to be recorded in a history of human manners. He suppressed the peasants of Gaul, who, under the

^p Julian in Cæsarib. p. 315. Spanheim's notes to the French translation, p. 122.

appellation of *Bagaudæ*,¹ had risen in a general insurrection; very similar to those which, in the fourteenth century, successively afflicted both France and England.² It should seem, that very many of those institutions, referred by an easy solution to the feudal system, are derived from the Celtic barbarians. When Caesar subdued the Gauls, that great nation was already divided into three orders of men; the clergy, the nobility, and the common people. The first governed by superstition, the second by arms, but the third and last was not of any weight or account in their public councils. It was very natural for the plebeians, oppressed by debt, or apprehensive of injuries, to implore the protection of some powerful chief, who acquired over their persons and property the same absolute right as, among the Greeks and Romans, a master exercised over his slaves.³ The greatest part of the nation was gradually reduced into a state of servitude; compelled to perpetual labour on the estates of the Gallic nobles, and confined to the soil, either by the real weight of setters, or by the no less cruel and forcible restraints of the laws. During the long series of troubles which agitated Gaul, from the reign of Gal-

¹ The general name of *Bagaudæ* (in the signification of rebels) continued till the fifth century in Gaul. Some critics derive it from a Celtic word *bagad*, a tumultuous assembly. Scaliger ad Euseb. Duange Glossar.

² Chronique de Froissart, vol. i, c. 182, ii, 73, 79. The *naïvete* of his story is lost in our best modern writers.

³ Caesar de Bell. Gallic. vi, 13. Orgetorix, the Helvetian, could arm for his defence a body of ten thousand slaves.

CHAP. lienus to that of Diocletian, the condition of these
 XIII. servile peasants was peculiarly miserable ; and they experienced at once the complicated tyranny of their masters, of the barbarians, of the soldiers, and of the officers of the revenue.^t

Their re-
bellion,

and chas-
tisement.

Their patience was at last provoked into despair. On every side they rose in multitudes, armed with rustic weapons and with irresistible fury. The ploughman became a foot soldier, the shepherd mounted on horseback, the deserted villages and open towns were abandoned to the flames, and the ravages of the peasants equalled those of the fiercest barbarians.^u They asserted the natural rights of men, but they asserted those rights with the most savage cruelty. The Gallic nobles, justly dreading their revenge, either took refuge in the fortified cities, or fled from the wild scene of anarchy. The peasants reigned without controul ; and two of their most daring leaders had the folly and rashness to assume the imperial ornaments.^v Their power soon expired at the approach of the legions. The strength of union and discipline obtained an easy victory over a licentious and divided multitude.^w A severe retaliation was inflicted on the peasants who were found in arms ; the affrighted remnant returned to their respective

^t Their oppression and misery are acknowledged by Eumenius (Panegyr. vi, 8), *Gallias afferatus injuriis.*

^u Panegyr. Vet. ii, 4. Aurelius Victor.

^v Albianus and Amandus. We have medals coined by them; Goltius in Thes. R. A. p. 117, 121.

^w *Levibus procellis domuit.* Eutrop. ix, 20.

habitations; and their unsuccessful effort for freedom served only to confirm their slavery. So strong and uniform is the current of popular passions, that we might almost venture, from very scanty materials, to relate the particulars of this war; but we are not disposed to believe that the principal leaders, Elianus and Amandus, were christians,² or to insinuate, that the rebellion, as it happened in the time of Luther, was occasioned by the abuse of those benevolent principles of christianity, which inculcate the natural freedom of mankind.

Maximian had no sooner recovered Gaul from the hands of the peasants, than he lost Britain by the usurpation of Carausius. Ever since the rash but successful enterprise of the Franks under the reign of Probus, their daring countrymen had constructed squadrons of light brigantines, in which they incessantly ravaged the provinces adjacent to the ocean.³ To repel these desultory incursions, it was found necessary to create a naval power; and the judicious measure was prosecuted with prudence and vigour. Gessoriacum, or Boulogne, in the straits of the British channel, was chosen by the emperor for the station of the Roman fleet; and the command of it was intrusted to Carausius, a Menapian of the

² The fact rests indeed on very slight authority, a life of St. Babolinus, which is probably of the seventh century. See Duchesne Scriptores Rer. Francicar. tom. i, p. 662.

³ Aurelius Victor calls them Germans. Eutropius (ix, 21) gives them the name of Saxons. But Eutropius lived in the ensuing century, and seems to use the language of his own times.

CHAP.
XIII.

CHAP. XIII. meanest origin,^b but who had long signalized his skill as a pilot, and his valour as a soldier. The integrity of the new admiral corresponded not with his abilities. When the German pirates sailed from their own harbours, he contrived at their passage, but he diligently intercepted their return, and appropriated to his own use an ample share of the spoil which they had acquired. The wealth of Carausius was, on this occasion, very justly considered as an evidence of his guilt; and Maximian had already given orders for his death. But the crafty Menapian foresaw and prevented the severity of the emperor. By his liberality he had attached to his fortunes the fleet which he commanded, and secured the barbarians in his interest. From the port of Boulogne he sailed over to Britain, persuaded the legion, and the auxiliaries which guarded that island, to embrace his party, and boldly assuming, with the imperial purple, the title of Augustus, defied the justice and the arms of his injured sovereign.^c

Import-
ance of
Britain.

When Britain was thus dismembered from the empire, its importance was sensibly felt, and its loss sincerely lamented. The Romans celebrated,

^b The three expressions of Eutropius, Aurelius Victor, and Eumenius, “ vilissime natus,” “ Bataviæ alumnus,” and “ Menapiæ ci-“ vis,” give us a very doubtful account of the birth of Carausius. Dr. Stukely, however (Hist. of Carausius, p. 62), chooses to make him a native of St. David’s, and a prince of the blood royal of Britain. The former idea he had found in Richard of Cirencester, p. 44.

^c Panegyr. v, 12. Britain at this time was secure, and slightly guarded.

and perhaps magnified, the extent of that noble CHAP.
island, provided on every side with convenient XIII.

harbours; the temperature of the climate and the fertility of the soil, alike adapted for the production of corn or of vines; the valuable minerals with which it abounded; its rich pastures covered with innumerable flocks, and its woods free from wild beasts or venomous serpents. Above all, they regretted the large amount of the revenue of Britain, whilst they confessed, that such a province well deserved to become the seat of an independent monarchy.^a During the space of seven years, it was possessed by Carausius; and fortune continued propitious to a rebellion, supported with courage and ability. The British emperor defended the frontiers of his dominions against the Caledonians of the north; invited, from the continent, a great number of skilful artists; and displayed, on a variety of coins that are still extant, his taste and opulence. Born on the confines of the Franks, he courted the friendship of that formidable people, by the flattering imitation of their dress and manners. The bravest of their youth he enlisted among his land or sea forces; and in return for their useful alliance, he communicated to the barbarians the dangerous know-

Power of
Carausius.

^a Panegyr. Vet. v, 11, vii, 9. The orator Eumenius wished to exalt the glory of the hero (Constantius) with the importance of the conquest. Notwithstanding our laudable partiality for our native country, it is difficult to conceive, that in the beginning of the fourth century, England deserved *all* these commendations. A century and a half before, it hardly paid its own establishment. See Appian in Proæm.

CHAP. ledge of military and naval arts. Carausius still
 XIII. preserved the possession of Boulogne and the ad-
 jacent country. His fleets rode triumphant in
 the channel, commanded the mouths of the Seine
 and of the Rhine, ravaged the coasts of the ocean,
 and diffused beyond the columns of Hercules
 the terror of his name. Under his command,
 Britain, destined in a future age to obtain
 the empire of the sea, already assumed its
 natural and respectable station of a maritime
 power.^e

A. D. 289.
 Acknow-
 ledged by
 the other
 emperors.

By seizing the fleet of Boulogne, Carausius
 had deprived his master of the means of pursuit
 and revenge. And when, after a vast expence
 of time and labour, a new armament was launch-
 ed into the water,^f the imperial troops, unaccus-
 tomed to that element, were easily baffled and
 defeated by the veteran sailors of the usurper.
 This disappointed effort was soon productive of
 a treaty of peace. Diocletian and his colleague,
 who justly dreaded the enterprising spirit of
 Carausius, resigned to him the sovereignty of
 Britain, and reluctantly admitted their perfidious
 servant to a participation of the imperial ho-

^e As a great number of medals of Carausius are still preserved, he is become a very favourite object of antiquarian curiosity, and every circumstance of his life and actions has been investigated with sagacious accuracy. Dr. Stukely, in particular, has devoted a large volume to the British emperor. I have used his materials, and rejected most of his fanciful conjectures.

^f When Mamertinus pronounced his first panegyric, the naval pre-
 parations of Maximian were completed; and the orator presaged an
 assured victory. His silence in the second panegyric might alone in-
 form us, that the expedition had not succeeded.

nours.⁵ But the adoption of the two Cæsars CHAP.
XIII. restored new vigour to the Roman arms; and while the Rhine was guarded by the presence of Maximian, his brave associate Constantius assumed the conduct of the British war. His first enterprise was against the important place of Boulogne. A stupendous mole, raised across the entrance of the harbour, intercepted all hopes of relief. The town surrendered after an obstinate ^{A. D. 292.} defence; and a considerable part of the naval strength of Carausius fell into the hands of the besiegers. During the three years which Constantius employed in preparing a fleet adequate to the conquest of Britain, he secured the coast of Gaul, invaded the country of the Franks, and deprived the usurper of the assistance of those powerful allies.

Before the preparations were finished, Constantius received the intelligence of the tyrant's <sup>A. D. 294.
His death.</sup> death, and it was considered as a sure presage of the approaching victory. The servants of Carausius imitated the example of treason which he had given. He was murdered by his first minister Allectus, and the assassin succeeded to his power and to his danger. But he possessed not equal abilities, either to exercise the one, or to repel the other. He beheld, with anxious terror, the opposite shores of the continent, already filled with arms, with troops, and with

⁵ Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, and the medals (Pax. Augg.) inform us of this temporary reconciliation, though I will not presume (as Dr. Stukely has done, *Medallic History of Carausius*, p. 86, &c.) to insert the identical articles of the treaty.

CHAP. vessels; for Constantius had very prudently divided his forces, that he might likewise divide the attention and resistance of the enemy. The attack was at length made by the principal squadron, which, under the command of the prefect Asclepiodatus, an officer of distinguished merit, had been assembled in the mouth of the Seine. So imperfect in those times was the art of navigation, that orators have celebrated the daring courage of the Romans, who ventured to set sail with a side-wind, and on a stormy day. The weather proved favourable to their enterprise. Under the cover of a thick fog, they escaped the fleet of Allectus, which had been stationed off the isle of Wight to receive them, landed in safety on some part of the western coast, and convinced the Britons, that a superiority of naval strength will not always protect their country from a foreign invasion. Asclepiodatus had no sooner disembarked the imperial troops, than he set fire to his ships; and, as the expedition proved fortunate, his heroic conduct was universally admired. The usurper had posted himself near London, to expect the formidable attack of Constantius, who commanded in person the fleet of Boulogne; but the descent of a new enemy required his immediate presence in the west. He performed this long march in so precipitate a manner, that he encountered the whole force of the prefect with a small body of harassed and disheartened troops. The engagement was soon terminated by the total defeat and death of

A. D. 296.
Recovery
of Britain
by Con-
stantius.

Allictus; a single battle, as it has often happened, decided the fate of this great island; and when Constantius landed on the shores of Kent, he found them covered with obedient subjects. Their acclamations were loud and unanimous; and the virtues of the conqueror may induce us to believe, that they sincerely rejoiced in a revolution, which, after a separation of ten years, restored Britain to the body of the Roman empire.^h

Britain had none but domestic enemies to dread; and as long as the governors preserved their fidelity, and the troops their discipline, the incursions of the naked savages of Scotland or Ireland could never materially affect the safety of the province. The peace of the continent, and the defence of the principal rivers which bounded the empire, were objects of far greater difficulty and importance. The policy of Diocletian, which inspired the councils of his associates, provided for the public tranquillity, by encouraging a spirit of dissension among the barbarians, and by strengthening the fortifications of the Roman limit. In the East he fixed a line of camps from Egypt to the Persian dominions, and for every camp he instituted an adequate number of stationary troops, commanded by their respective officers, and supplied with every kind of arms, from the new arsenals which he had formed at Antioch, Emesa, and Damas-

CHAP.
XIII.Defence of
the fron-
tiers.Fortifica-
tions.

^h With regard to the recovery of Britain, we obtain a few hints from *Aurelius Victor* and *Eutropius*.

CHAP. cus.¹ Nor was the precaution of the emperor less watchful against the well-known valour of the barbarians of Europe. From the mouth of the Rhine to that of the Danube, the ancient camps, towns, and citadels, were diligently re-established, and in the most exposed places, new ones were skillfully constructed; the strictest vigilance was introduced among the garrisons of the frontier, and every expedient was practised that could render the long chain of fortifications firm and impenetrable.^k A barrier so respectable was seldom violated, and the barbarians often turned against each other their disappointed

Dissensions of the barbarians. rage. The Goths, the Vandals, the Gepidae, the Burgundians, the Alemanni, wasted each other's strength by destructive hostilities; and whosoever vanquished, they vanquished the enemies of Rome. The subjects of Diocletian enjoyed the bloody spectacle, and congratulated each other, that the mischiefs of civil war were now experienced only by the barbarians.^l

Conduct of the emperors. Notwithstanding the policy of Diocletian, it was impossible to maintain an equal and undisturbed tranquillity during a reign of twenty

¹ John Malela, in Chron. Antiochen, tom. i, p. 408, 409.

^k Zosim. I. i, p. 3. That partial historian seems to celebrate the vigilance of Diocletian, with a design of exposing the negligence of Constantine: we may, however, listen to an orator, " Nam quid ego " alarum et cohortium cästra percensem, toto Rheni et Istri et Eu- " phratis limite restituta." Panegyr. Vet. iv, 18.

^l Ruunt omnes in sanguinem suum populi, quibus non contigit esse Romanis, obstinataque feritatis penas nunc sponte persolvunt. Panegyr. Vet. iii, 16. Mamertinus illustrates the fact, by the example of almost all the nations of the world.

years, and along a frontier of many hundred miles. Sometimes the barbarians suspended their domestic animosities, and the relaxed vigilance of the garrisons sometimes gave a passage to their strength or dexterity. Whenever the provinces were invaded, Diocletian conducted himself with that calm dignity which he always affected or possessed; reserved his presence for such occasions as were worthy of his interposition, never exposed his person or reputation to any unnecessary danger, ensured his success by every means that prudence could suggest, and displayed, with ostentation, the consequences of his victory. In wars of a more difficult nature, and more doubtful event, he employed the rough valour of Maximian; and that faithful soldier was content to ascribe his own victories to the wise counsels and auspicious influence of his benefactor. But after the adoption of the two ^{the Valour of} Cæsars, the emperors themselves retiring to a ^{the Cæsars,} less laborious scene of action, devolved on their adopted sons the defence of the Danube and of the Rhine. The vigilant Galerius was never reduced to the necessity of vanquishing an army of barbarians on the Roman territory.^m The brave and active Constantius delivered Gaul from a very furious inroad of the Alemanni; and his victories of Langres and Vindonissa appear to have been actions of considerable danger and

^m He complained, though not with the strictest truth, “ Jam fluxisse annos quindecim in quibus, in Illyrico, ad ripam Danubii regatus cum gentibus barbaris luctaret.” Lactant. de M. P. c. 19.

CHAP. XIII. merit. As he traversed the open country with a feeble guard, he was encompassed on a sudden by the superior multitude of the enemy. He retreated with difficulty towards Langres; but in the general consternation, the citizens refused to open their gates, and the wounded prince was drawn up the wall by the means of a rope. But, on the news of his distress, the Roman troops hastened from all sides to his relief, and before the evening he had satisfied his honour and revenge by the slaughter of six thousand Alemanni.^a From the monuments of those times, the obscure traces of several other victories over the barbarians of Sarmatia and Germany might possibly be collected; but the tedious search would not be rewarded either with amusement or with instruction.

Treatment of the barbarians. The conduct which the emperor Probus had adopted in the disposal of the vanquished, was imitated by Diocletian and his associates. The captive barbarians, exchanging death for slavery, were distributed among the provincials, and assigned to those districts (in Gaul, the territories of Amiens, Beauvais, Cambray, Treves, Langres, and Troyes, are particularly specified)^b which had been depopulated by the calamities of war. They were usefully employed as shepherds and husbandmen, but were denied the exercise

^a In the Greek text of Eusebius, we read six thousand, a number which I have preferred to sixty thousand of Jerome, Orosius, Eutropius, and his Greek translator Pæanius.

^b Panegyr. Vet. vii, 21.

of arms, except when it was found expedient to enrol them in the military service. Nor did the emperors refuse the property of lands, with a less servile tenure, to such of the barbarians as solicited the protection of Rome. They granted a settlement to several colonies of the Carpi, the Bastarnæ, and the Sarmatians; and, by a dangerous indulgence, permitted them in some measure to retain their national manners and independence.^p Among the provincials, it was a subject of flattering exultation, that the barbarian, so lately an object of terror, now cultivated their lands, drove their cattle to the neighbouring fair, and contributed by his labour to the public plenty. They congratulated their masters on the powerful accession of subjects and soldiers; but they forgot to observe, that multitudes of secret enemies, insolent from favour, or desperate from oppression, were introduced into the heart of the empire.^q

While the Cæsars exercised their valour on the banks of the Rhine and Danube, the presence of the emperors was required on the southern confines of the Roman world. From the Nile

^p There was a settlement of the Sarmatians in the neighbourhood of Treves, which seems to have been deserted by those lazy barbarians: Ausonius speaks of them in his Moselle;

Unde iter ingrediens nomorosa per avia solum,

Et nulla humani spectans vestigia cultus

Arvaque Sauromatum nuper metata colonis.

There was a town of the Carpi in the Lower Mæsia.

^q See the rhetorical exultation of Eumenius. Panegyr. vii, 9.

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CHAP. to mount Atlas, Africa was in arms. A con-  
 XIII. federacy of five Moorish nations issued from  
 their deserts to invade the peaceful provinces.<sup>5</sup>  
 Julian had assumed the purple at Carthage.<sup>6</sup>  
 Achilleus at Alexandria, and even the Blem-  
 myes, renewed, or rather continued, their in-  
 cursions into the Upper Egypt. Scarcely any  
 circumstances have been preserved of the exploits  
 of Maximian in the western parts of Africa;  
 but it appears by the event, that the progress  
 of his arms was rapid and decisive, that he van-  
 quished the fiercest barbarians of Mauritania,  
 and that he removed them from the mountains,  
 whose inaccessible strength had inspired their  
 inhabitants with a lawless confidence, and habi-  
 tuated them to a life of rapine and violence.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>a. d. 296.</sup> <sup>Conduct of</sup> Diocletian, on his side, opened the campaign in  
 Egypt by the siege of Alexandria; cut off the  
 aqueducts which conveyed the waters of the Nile  
 into every quarter of that immense city;<sup>8</sup> and  
 rendering his camp impregnable to the sallies of  
 the besieged multitude, he pushed his reiterated  
 attacks with caution and vigour. After a siege  
 of eight months, Alexandria, wasted by the sword

<sup>5</sup> Scaliger (Animadvers. ad Euseb. p. 243) decides in his usual manner, that the Quinque gentiani, or five African nations, were the five great cities, the Pentapolis of the inoffensive province of Cyrene.

<sup>6</sup> After his defeat, Julian stabbed himself with a dagger, and immediately leaped into the flames. Victor in Epitome.

<sup>7</sup> Tu ferocissimos Mauritaniae, populos inaccessis montium jugis et naturali munitione fidentes, expugnasti, recipisti, transtulisti. Panegyr. Vet. vi. 8.

<sup>8</sup> See the description of Alexandria, in Hirtius de Bel. Alexandrii. c. 5.

and by fire, implored the clemency of the conqueror; but it experienced the full extent of his severity. Many thousands of the citizens perished in a promiscuous slaughter, and there were few obnoxious persons in Egypt who escaped a sentence either of death, or at least of exile.<sup>x</sup> The fate of Eusiris and of Coptos was still more melancholy than that of Alexandria: those proud cities, the former distinguished by its antiquity, the latter enriched by the passage of the Indian trade, were utterly destroyed by the arms and by the severe order of Diocletian.<sup>y</sup> The character of the Egyptian nation, insensible to kindness, but extremely susceptible of fear, could alone justify this excessive rigour. The seditions of Alexandria had often affected the tranquillity and subsistence of Rome itself. Since the usurpation of Firmus, the provinces of Upper Egypt, incessantly relapsing into rebellion, had embraced the alliance of the savages of *Aethiopia*. The number of the Blemmyes, scattered between the island of Meroe and the Red sea, was very inconsiderable, their disposition was unwarlike, their weapons rude and inoffensive<sup>z</sup>. Yet in the public disorders these barbarians, whom anti-

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<sup>x</sup> Eutrop. ix, 24. Orosius, vii, 25. John Malela in Chron. Antioch. p. 409, 410. Yet Eumenius assures us, that Egypt was pacified by the clemency of Diocletian.

<sup>y</sup> Eusebius (in Chron.) places their destruction several years sooner, and at a time when Egypt itself was in a state of rebellion against the Romans.

<sup>z</sup> Strabo, I. xvii, p. 1, 172. Pomponius Mela, I. i, c. 4. His words are curious, “*Intra, si credere libet, vix homines magisque semistre; Egipanes, et Blemmyes, et Satyri.*”

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quity, shocked with the deformity of their figure, had almost excluded from the human species, presumed to rank themselves among the enemies of Rome.<sup>a</sup> Such had been the unworthy allies of the Egyptians; and while the attention of the state was engaged in more serious wars, their vexatious inroads might again harass the repose of the province. With a view of opposing to the Blemmyes a suitable adversary, Diocletian persuaded the Nobatæ, or people of Nubia, to remove from their ancient habitations in the deserts of Lybia, and resigned to them an extensive but unprofitable territory above Syene and the cataracts of the Nile, with the stipulation, that they should ever respect and guard the frontier of the empire. The treaty long subsisted; and till the establishment of christianity introduced stricter notions of religious worship, it was annually ratified by a solemn sacrifice in the isle of Elephantine, in which the Romans, as well as the barbarians, adored the same visible or invisible powers of the universe.<sup>b</sup>

At the same time that Diocletian chastised the past crimes of the Egyptians, he provided for their future safety and happiness by many wise regulations, which were confirmed and enforced under the succeeding reigns.<sup>c</sup> One very remarkable edict, which he published, instead of being

<sup>a</sup> Ausus sese inserere fortunæ et provocare arma Romana.

<sup>b</sup> See Procopius de Bell. Persic. l. i. c. 19.

<sup>c</sup> He fixed the public allowance of corn for the people of Alexandria, at two millions of *medimni*: about four hundred thousand quarters. Chron. Paschal. p. 276. Procop. Hist. Arcan. c. 26.

condemned as the effect of jealous tyranny, deserves to be applauded as an act of prudence and humanity. He caused a diligent enquiry to be made "for all the ancient books which treated of the admirable art of making gold and silver, and without <sup>He sup-</sup> pity committed them to the flames; <sup>presses</sup> apprehensive, as we are assured, lest the opulence of the Egyptians should inspire them with confidence to rebel against the empire."<sup>1</sup> But if Diocletian had been convinced of the reality of that valuable art, far from extinguishing the memory, he would have converted the operation of it to the benefit of the public revenue. It is much more likely, that his good sense discovered to him the folly of such magnificent pretensions, and that he was desirous of preserving the reason and fortunes of his subjects from the mischievous pursuit. It may be remarked, that these ancient books, so liberally ascribed to Pythagoras, to Solomon, or to Hermes, were the pious frauds of more recent adepts. The Greeks were inattentive either to the use or to the abuse of chymistry. In that immense register, where Pliny has deposited the discoveries, the arts, and the errors of mankind, there is not the least mention of the transmutation of metals; and the persecution of Diocletian is the first authentic event in the history of alchymy. The conquest of Egypt by the Arabs diffused that vain science over the globe. Congenial to the avarice of the human heart, it was studied in China as in Europe, with

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XIII.books of  
alchymy.Novelty  
and pro-  
gress of  
that art.

<sup>1</sup> John Antioch in Excerpt. Valesian, p. 834. Suidas in Diocletian.

CHAP. XIII. equal eagerness, and with equal success. The darkness of the middle ages ensured a favourable reception to every tale of wonder, and the revival of learning gave new vigour to hope, and suggested more specious arts of deception. Philosophy, with the aid of experience, has at length banished the study of alchymy ; and the present age, however desirous of riches, is content to seek them by the humbler means of commerce and industry.\*

The Per-  
sian war. The reduction of Egypt was immediately followed by the Persian war. It was reserved for the reign of Diocletian to vanquish that powerful nation, and to extort a confession from the successors of Artaxerxes, of the superior majesty of the Roman empire.

Tiridates  
the Arme-  
nian. We have observed under the reign of Valerian, that Armenia was subdued by the perfidy and the arms of the Persians, and that, after the assassination of Chosroes, his son Tiridates, the infant heir of the monarchy, was saved by the fidelity of his friends, and educated under the protection of the emperors. Tiridates derived from his exile such advantages as he could never have obtained on the throne of Armenia ; the early knowledge of adversity, of mankind, and of the Roman discipline. He signalized his youth by deeds of valour, and displayed a matchless dexterity, as well as strength, in every martial exercise, and even in the less honourable contests

\* See a short history and confutation of alchymy, in the works of that philosophical compiler, La Mothe le Vayer, tom. i, p. 327-353.

of the Olympian games.<sup>f</sup> Those qualities were more nobly exerted in the defence of his benefactor Licinius.<sup>g</sup> That officer, in the sedition which occasioned the death of Probus, was exposed to the most imminent danger, and the enraged soldiers were forcing their way into his tent, when they were checked by the single arm of the Armenian prince. The gratitude of Tiridates contributed soon afterwards to his restoration. Licinius was in every station the friend and companion of Galerius, and the merit of Galerius, long before he was raised to the dignity of Cæsar, had been known and esteemed by Diocletian. In the third year of that emperor's reign, Tiridates was invested with the kingdom of Armenia. The justice of the measure was not less evident than its expediency. It was time to rescue from the usurpation of the Persian monarch, an important territory, which, since the reign of Nero, had been always granted under the protection of the empire to a younger branch of the house of Arsaces.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>f</sup> See the education and strength of Tiridates in the Armenian history of Moses of Choren, l. ii, c. 76. He could seize two wild bulls by the horns, and break them off with his hands.

<sup>g</sup> If we give credit to the younger Victor, who supposes that in the year 323, Licinius was only sixty years of age, he could scarcely be the same person as the patron of Tiridates; but we know from much better authority (Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. x, c. 8), that Licinius was at that time in the last period of old age: sixteen years before, he is represented with grey hairs, and as the contemporary of Galerius. See Lactant. c. 32. Licinius was probably born about the year 250.

<sup>h</sup> See the sixty-second and sixty-third books of Dion Cassius.

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XIII.

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A. D. 286,  
His restora-  
tion to the  
throne of  
Armenia.

State of the  
country.

Revolt of  
the people  
and nobles.

When Tiridates appeared on the frontiers of Armenia, he was received with an unfeigned transport of joy and loyalty. During twenty-six years, the country had experienced the real and imaginary hardships of a foreign yoke. The Persian monarchs adorned their new conquest with magnificent buildings; but those monuments had been erected at the expence of the people, and were abhorred as badges of slavery. The apprehension of a revolt had inspired the most rigorous precautions: oppression had been aggravated by insult, and the consciousness of the public hatred had been productive of every measure that could render it still more implacable. We have already remarked the intolerant spirit of the Magian religion. The statues of the deified kings of Armenia, and the sacred images of the sun and moon, were broke in pieces by the zeal of the conqueror; and the perpetual fire of Ormuzd was kindled and preserved upon an altar erected on the summit of mount Bagayan.<sup>1</sup> It was natural, that a people exasperated by so many injuries, should arm with zeal in the cause of their independence, their religion, and their hereditary sovereign. The torrent bore down every obstacle, and the Persian garrisons retreated before its fury. The nobles of Armenia flew to

<sup>1</sup> Moses of Choren, Hist. Armen. I. ii, c. 74. The statues had been erected by Valarsaces, who reigned in Armenia about 130 years before Christ, and was the first king of the family of Arsaces (see Moses Hist. Armen. I. ii, c. 3). The deification of the Arsacides is mentioned by Justin (xli, 5), and by Ammianus Marcellinus (xxiii, 6).

the standard of Tiridates, all alleging their past merit, offering their future service, and soliciting from the new king those honours and rewards from which they had been excluded with disdain under the foreign government.<sup>k</sup> The command of the army was bestowed on Artavasdes, whose father had saved the infancy of Tiridates, and whose family had been massacred for that generous action. The brother of Artavasdes obtained the government of a province. One of the first military dignities was conferred on the satrap Otas, a man of singular temperance and fortitude, who presented to the king, his sister<sup>l</sup> and a considerable treasure, both of which, in a sequestered fortress, Otas had preserved from violation. Among the Armenian nobles appeared an ally, whose fortunes are too remarkable to pass unnoticed. His name was Mamgo, his origin was Scythian, and the horde which acknowledged his authority, had encamped a very few years before on the skirts of the Chinese empire,<sup>m</sup> which at that time extended as far as the neigh-

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XIII.

Story of  
Mamgo.

<sup>k</sup> The Armenian nobility was numerous and powerful. Moses mentions many families which were distinguished under the reign of Valsaces (l. ii, 7), and which still subsisted in his own time, about the middle of the fifth century. See the preface of his editors.

<sup>l</sup> She was named Chosroiducta, and had not the *ospatulum* like other women. (Hist. Armen. l. ii, c. 97). I do not understand the expression.

<sup>m</sup> In the Armenian History (l. ii, 78), as well as in the Geography (p. 367), China is called Zenia, or Zenastan. It is characterized by the production of silk, by the opulence of the natives, and by their love of peace, above all the other nations of the earth.

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XIII:

bourhood of Sogdiana.<sup>a</sup> Having incurred the displeasure of his master, Mamgo, with his followers, retired to the banks of the Oxus, and implored the protection of Sapor. The emperor of China claimed<sup>a</sup> the fugitive, and alleged the rights of sovereignty. The Persian monarch pleaded the laws of hospitality, and with some difficulty avoided a war, by the promise that he would banish Mamgo to the uttermost parts of the West; a punishment, as he described it, not less dreadful than death itself. Armenia was chosen for the place of exile, and a large district was assigned to the Scythian horde, on which they might feed their flocks and herds, and remove their encampment from one place to another, according to the different seasons of the year. They were employed to repel the invasion of Tiridates; but their leader, after weighing the obligations and injuries which he had received from the Persian monarch, resolved to abandon his party. The Armenian prince, who was well acquainted with the merit as well as power of Mamgo, treated him with distinguished respect; and by admitting him into his confidence, ac-

<sup>a</sup> You-ti, the first emperor of the seventh dynasty, who then reigned in China, had political transactions with Fergana, a province of Sogdiana, and is said to have received a Roman embassy (*Histoire des Huns*, tom. i, p. 38). In those ages the Chinese kept a garrison at Kashgar, and one of their generals, about the time of Trajan, marched as far as the Caspian sea. With regard to the intercourse between China and the western countries, a curious memoir of M. de Guignes may be consulted, in the *Academie des Inscriptions*, tom. xxii, p. 355.

quired a brave and faithful servant, who contributed very effectually to his restoration.<sup>o</sup> CHAP.  
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For a while, fortune appeared to favour the enterprising valour of Tiridates. He not only expelled the enemies of his family and country from the whole extent of Armenia, but in the prosecution of his revenge he carried his arms, or at least his incursions, into the heart of Assyria. The historian, who has preserved the name of Tiridates from oblivion, celebrates with a degree of national enthusiasm, his personal prowess; and, in the true spirit of eastern romance, describes the giants and the elephants that fell beneath his invincible arm. It is from other information that we discover the distracted state of the Persian monarchy, to which the king of Armenia was indebted for some part of his advantages. The throne was disputed by the ambition of contending brothers; and Hormuz, after exerting without success the strength of his own party, had recourse to the dangerous assistance of the barbarians who inhabited the banks of the Caspian sea.<sup>p</sup> The civil war was, however, soon terminated, either by a victory, or by a reconciliation; and Narses, who was universally acknowledged as king of Persia, directed his whole

<sup>o</sup> See Hist. Armen. 1. ii, c. 81.

<sup>p</sup> Ipsos Persas ipsumque regem ascitis Saccis, et Russis, et Gelliis, petit frater Ormies. Panegyric. Vet. iii, 1. The Saccæ were a nation of wandering Scythians, who encamped towards the sources of the Oxus and the Jaxartes. The Gelli were the inhabitants of Ghilan along the Caspian sea, and who so long, under the name of Dilemites, infested the Persian monarchy. See d'Herbelot, Bibliothéque Orientale.

CHAP. force against the foreign enemy. The contest  
 XIII. then became too unequal ; nor was the valour of  
 the hero able to withstand the power of the mon-  
 arch. Tiridates, a second time expelled from  
 the throne of Armenia, once more took refuge  
 in the court of the emperors. Narses soon re-  
 established his authority over the revolted pro-  
 vince ; and loudly complaining of the protection  
 afforded by the Romans to rebels and fugitives,  
 aspired to the conquest of the East.<sup>1</sup>

War be-  
 tween the  
 Persians  
 and the  
 Romans,  
 a. d. 296.

Defeat of  
 Galerius.

Neither prudence nor honour could permit the emperors to forsake the cause of the Armenian king, and it was resolved to exert the force of the empire in the Persian war. Diocletian, with the calm dignity which he constantly assumed, fixed his own station in the city of Antioch, from whence he prepared and directed the military operations.<sup>2</sup> The conduct of the legions was intrusted to the intrepid valour of Galerius, who, for that important purpose, was removed from the banks of the Danube to those of the Euphrates. The armies soon encountered each other in the plains of Mesopotamia, and two battles were fought with various and doubtful success : but the third engagement was of a more decisive

<sup>1</sup> Moses of Choren takes no notice of this second revolution, which I have been obliged to collect from a passage of Ammianus Marcellinus (l. xxiii, 5). Lactantius speaks of the ambition of Narses, “Concitus domesticis exemplis avi sui Saporis ad occupandum orientem magnis copiis inhiabat.” De Mort. Persecut. c. 9.

<sup>2</sup> We may readily believe, that Lactantius ascribes to cowardice the conduct of Diocletian. Julian, in his oration, says, that he remained with all the forces of the empire ; a very hyperbolical expression,

nature ; and the Roman army received a total overthrow, which is attributed to the rashness of Galerius, who, with an inconsiderable body of troops, attacked the innumerable host of the Persians.<sup>s</sup> But the consideration of the country that was the scene of action, may suggest another reason for his defeat. The same ground on which Galerius was vanquished, had been rendered memorable by the death of Crassus, and the slaughter of ten legions. It was a plain of more than sixty miles, which extended from the hills of Carrhae to the Euphrates ; a smooth and barren surface of sandy desert, without a hillock, without a tree, and without a spring of fresh water.<sup>t</sup> The steady infantry of the Romans, fainting with heat and thirst, could neither hope for victory if they preserved their ranks, nor break their ranks without exposing themselves to the most imminent danger. In this situation they were gradually encompassed by the superior numbers, harassed by the rapid evolutions, and destroyed by the arrows of the barbarian cavalry. The king of Armenia had signalized his valour in the battle, and acquired personal glory by the public misfortune. He was pursued as far as the Euphrates ; his horse was wounded, and it appeared impossible for him to escape the victorious enemy.

<sup>s</sup> Our five abbreviators, Eutropius, Festus, the two Victors, and Orosius, all relate the last and great battle ; but Orosius is the only one who speaks of the two former.

<sup>t</sup> The nature of the country is finely described by Plutarch, in the life of Crassus ; and by Xenophon, in the first book of the Anabasis.

refuge which he saw before him: he dismounted and plunged into the stream. His armour was heavy, the river very deep, and at those parts at least half a mile in breadth,<sup>u</sup> yet such was his strength and dexterity, that he reached in safety the opposite bank.<sup>x</sup> With regard to the Roman general, we are ignorant of the circumstances of his escape; but when he returned to Antioch, Diocletian received him, not with the tenderness of a friend and colleague, but with the indignation of an offended sovereign. The haughtiest of men, clothed in his purple, but humbled by the sense of his fault and misfortune, was obliged to follow the emperor's chariot above a mile on foot, and to exhibit before the whole court the spectacle of his disgrace.<sup>y</sup>

Second campaign of Galerius,

A. D. 297.

As soon as Diocletian had indulged his private resentment, and asserted the majesty of supreme power, he yielded to the submissive entreaties of the Cæsar, and permitted him to retrieve his own honour, as well as that of the Roman arms. In the room of the unwarlike troops of Asia, which had most probably served in the first expedition, a second army was drawn from the veterans and new levies of the Illyrian frontier, and a consi-

<sup>u</sup> See Foster's Dissertation in the second volume of the translation of the *Anabasis* by Spelman; which I will venture to recommend as one of the best versions extant.

<sup>x</sup> Hist. Armen. l. ii, c. 76. I have transferred this exploit of Tiridates from an imaginary defeat to the real one of Galerius.

<sup>y</sup> Ammian. Marcellin. l. xiv. The mile, in the hands of Eutropius (ix, 24), of Festus (c. 25), and of Orosius (vii, 25), easily increased to several miles.

derable body of Gothic auxiliaries were taken into the imperial pay.<sup>a</sup> At the head of a chosen army of twenty-five thousand men, Galerius again passed the Euphrates; but, instead of exposing his legions in the open plains of Mesopotamia, he advanced through the mountains of Armenia, where he found the inhabitants devoted to his cause, and the country as favourable to the operations of infantry, as it was inconvenient for the motions of cavalry.<sup>a</sup> Adversity had confirmed His victory, the Roman discipline, while the barbarians, elated by success, were become so negligent and remiss, that in the moment when they least expected it, they were surprised by the active conduct of Galerius, who, attended only by two horsemen, had with his own eyes secretly examined the state and position of their camp. A surprise, especially in the night-time, was for the most part fatal to a Persian army. "Their horses were tied, and generally shackled, to prevent their running away; and if an alarm happened, a Persian had his housing to fix, his horse to bridle, and his corslet to put on, before he could mount."<sup>b</sup> On this occasion, the impetuous attack of Galerius spread disorder and dismay over the camp of the barbarians. A slight resistance was followed by a dreadful car-

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<sup>a</sup> Aurelius Victor. *Jornandes de Rebus Geticis*, c. 21.

<sup>b</sup> Aurelius Victor says, "Per Armeniam in hostes contendit, que ferme sola, seu facilior vincendi via est." He followed the conduct of Trajan, and the idea of Julius Cæsar.

<sup>b</sup> Xenophon's *Anabasis*, I. iii. For that reason the Persian cavalry encamped sixty stadia from the enemy.

CHAP. XIII. nage ; and, in the general confusion, the wounded monarch (for Narses commanded his armies in person) fled towards the deserts of Media. His sumptuous tents, and those of his satraps, afforded an immense booty to the conqueror ; and an incident is mentioned, which proves the rustic but martial ignorance of the legions, in the elegant superfluities of life. A bag of shining leather, filled with pearls, fell into the hands of a private soldier ; he carefully preserved the bag, but he threw away its contents, judging that whatever was of no use could not possibly be of any value.<sup>c</sup> The principal loss of Narses was of a much more affecting nature. Several of his wives, his sisters, and children, who had attended the army, were made captives in the defeat. But though the character of Galerius had in general very little affinity with that of Alexander, he imitated, after his victory, the amiable behaviour of the Macedonian towards the family of Darius. The wives and children of Narses were protected from violence and rapine, conveyed to a place of safety, and treated with every mark of respect and tenderness, that was due from a generous enemy, to their age, their sex, and their royal dignity.<sup>d</sup>

Negotiation for peace.

While the East anxiously expected the decision of this great contest, the emperor Diocletian,

<sup>c</sup> The story is told by Ammianus, l. xxii. Instead of *saccum* some read *scutum*.

<sup>d</sup> The Persians confessed the Roman superiority in morals as well as in arms. Eutrop. ix, 24. But this respect and gratitude of enemies is very seldom to be found in their own accounts.

having assembled in Syria a strong army of ob- CHAP.  
servation, displayed from a distance the resources XIII.  
of the Roman power, and reserved himself for any future emergency of the war. On the intelligence of the victory, he condescended to advance towards the frontier, with a view of moderating, by his presence and counsels, the pride of Galerius. The interview of the Roman princes at Nisibis was accompanied with every expression of respect on one side, and of esteem on the other. It was in that city they soon afterwards gave audience to the ambassador of the great king.<sup>\*</sup> The power, or at least the spirit of Narses, had been broken by his last defeat; and he considered an immediate peace as the only means that could stop the progress of the Roman arms. He dispatched Apharban, a servant who possessed his favour and confidence, with a commission to negotiate a treaty, or rather to receive whatever conditions the conqueror should impose. Apharban opened the conference by ex- Speech of the Persian ambassador.  
pressing his master's gratitude for the generous treatment of his family, and by soliciting the liberty of those illustrious captives. He celebrated the valour of Galerius, without degrading the reputation of Narses, and thought it no dishonour to confess the superiority of the victorious Cæsar, over a monarch who had surpassed in glory all the

\* The account of the negotiation is taken from the fragments of Peter the patrician, in the *Excerpta Legationum*, published in the *Byzantine Collection*. Peter lived under Justinian; but it is very evident, by the nature of his materials, that they are drawn from the most authentic and respectable writers.

princes of his race. Notwithstanding the justice of the Persian cause, he was empowered to submit the present differences to the decision of the emperors themselves; convinced as he was, that, in the midst of prosperity, they would not be unmindful of the vicissitudes of fortune. Aphares concluded his discourse in the style of eastern allegory, by observing that the Roman and Persian monarchies were the two eyes of the world, which would remain imperfect and mutilated if either of them should be put out.

Answer of  
Galerius.

"It well becomes the Persians," replied Galerius, with a transport of fury which seemed to convulse his whole frame, "it well becomes the Persians to expatriate on the vicissitudes of fortune, and calmly to read us lectures on the virtues of moderation. Let them remember their own *moderation* towards the unhappy Valerian. They vanquished him by fraud, they treated him with indignity. They detained him till the last moment of his life in shameful captivity, and after his death they exposed his body to perpetual ignominy." Softening, however, his tone, Galerius insinuated to the ambassador, that it had never been the practice of the Romans to trample on a prostrate enemy; and that, on this occasion, they should consult their own dignity rather than the Persian merit. He dismissed Aphares with a hope, that Narses would soon be informed on what conditions he might obtain, from the clemency of the emperors, a lasting peace, and the restoration of his

wives and children. In this conference we may discover the fierce passions of Galerius, as well as his deference to the superior wisdom and authority of Diocletian. The ambition of the former

grasped at the conquest of the East, and had proposed to reduce Persia into the state of a province. The prudence of the latter, who adhered to the

Modera-  
tion of Di-  
ocletian.

CHAP. XIII. on the Armenian frontier.<sup>5</sup> The first condition proposed by the ambassador, is not at present of a very intelligible nature; that the city of Nisibis might be established for the place of mutual exchange, or, as we should formerly have termed it, for the staple of trade between the two empires. There is no difficulty in conceiving the intention of the Roman princes to improve their revenue by some restraints upon commerce; but as Nisibis was situated within their own dominions, and as they were masters both of the imports and exports, it should seem that such restraints were the objects of an internal law, rather than of a foreign treaty. To render them more effectual, some stipulations were probably required on the side of the king of Persia, which appeared so very repugnant either to his interest or to his dignity, that Narses could not be persuaded to subscribe them. As this was the only article to which he refused his consent, it was no longer insisted on; and the emperors either suffered the trade to flow in its natural channels, or contented themselves with such restrictions, as it depended on their own authority to establish.

and articles  
of the  
reaty.

As soon as this difficulty was removed, a solemn peace was concluded and ratified between the two nations. The conditions of a treaty, so glorious to the empire, and so necessary to Persia,

<sup>5</sup> He had been governor of Sumium (Pet. Patricius in Excerpt. Legat. p. 30). This province seems to be mentioned by Moses of Chorene (Geograph. p. 360), and lay to the east of mount Ararat.

may deserve a more peculiar attention, as the history of Rome presents very few transactions of a similar nature; most of her wars having either been terminated by absolute conquest, or waged against barbarians ignorant of the use of letters.

i. The Aboras, or, as it is called by Xenophon, the Araxes, was fixed as the boundary between the two monarchies.<sup>b</sup> The river, which rose near the Tigris, was increased, a few miles below Nisibis, by the little stream of the Mygdonius, passed under the walls of Singara, and fell into the Euphrates at Circesium, a frontier town, which, by the care of Diocletian, was very strongly fortified.<sup>i</sup> Mesopotamia, the object of so many wars, was ceded to the empire, and the Persians, by this treaty, renounced all pretensions to that great province. ii. They relinquished to the Romans five provinces beyond the Tigris.<sup>k</sup> Their situation formed a very useful barrier, and their natural strength was soon im-

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The Aboras fixed as the limits between the empires.

Cession of five provinces beyond the Tigris.

<sup>a</sup> By an error of the geographer Ptolemy, the position of Singara is removed from the Aboras to the Tigris, which may have produced the mistake of Peter, in assigning the latter river for the boundary, instead of the former. The line of the Roman frontier traversed, but never followed, the course of the Tigris.

<sup>i</sup> Procopius de Edificiis, I. ii. c. 6.

<sup>k</sup> Three of the provinces, Zabdicene, Arzanene, and Carduene, are allowed on all sides. But instead of the other two, Peter (in Excerpt. Leg. p. 30) inserts Rehimene and Sophene. I have preferred Ammianus (I. xxv, 7), because it might be proved, that Sophene was never in the hands of the Persians, either before the reign of Diocletian, or after that of Jovian. For want of correct maps, like those of M. d'Anville, almost all the moderns, with Tillemont and Valesius at their head, have imagined, that it was in respect to Persia, and not to Rome, that the five provinces were situate beyond the Tigris.

UTTA

CHAP. proved by art and military skill. Four of these,  
XIII. to the north of the river, were districts of obscure  
fame and inconsiderable extent; Intiline, Zab-  
dicene, Arzanene, and Moxoene; but on the  
east of the Tigris, the empire acquired the large  
and mountainous territory of Carduene, the an-  
cient seat of the Carduchians, who preserved for  
many ages their manly freedom in the heart of  
the despotic monarchies of Asia. The ten thou-  
sand Greeks traversed their country, after a pain-  
ful march, or rather engagement, of seven days;  
and it is confessed by their leader, in his incom-  
parable relation of the retreat, that they suffered  
more from the arrows of the Carduchians, than  
from the power of the great king.<sup>1</sup> Their  
posterity, the Curds, with very little alteration  
either of name or manners, acknowledged the  
nominal sovereignty of the Turkish sultan. III.

Armenia. It is almost needless to observe, that Tiridates,  
the faithful ally of Rome, was restored to the  
throne of his fathers, and that the rights of the  
imperial supremacy were fully asserted and se-  
cured. The limits of Armenia were extended as  
far as the fortress of Sintha in Media, and this  
increase of dominion was not so much an act of  
liberality as of justice. Of the provinces already  
mentioned beyond the Tigris, the four first had  
been dismembered by the Parthians from the

<sup>1</sup> Xenophon's Anabasis, I. iv. Their bows were three cubits in  
length, their arrows two; they rolled down stones that were each a  
waggon load. The Greeks found a great many villages in that rude  
country.

crown of Armenia;<sup>m</sup> and when the Romans acquired the possession of them, they stipulated, at the expence of the usurpers, an ample compensation, which invested their ally with the extensive and fertile country of Atropatene. Its principal city, in the same situation perhaps as the modern Tauris, was frequently honoured with the residence of Tiridates; and as it sometimes bore the name of Ecbatana, he imitated, in the buildings and fortifications, the splendid capital of the Medes.<sup>n</sup> IV. The country of Iberia was Iberia. barren, its inhabitants rude and savage. But they were accustomed to the use of arms, and they separated from the empire barbarians much fiercer and more formidable than themselves. The narrow defiles of mount Caucasus were in their hands, and it was in their choice, either to admit or to exclude the wandering tribes of Sarmatia, whenever a rapacious spirit urged them to penetrate into the richer climes of the south.<sup>o</sup> The nomination of the kings of Iberia, which was resigned by the Persian monarch to the emperors, contributed to the strength and security of the Roman power in Asia.<sup>p</sup> The East en-

<sup>m</sup> According to Eutropius (vi, 9, as the text is represented by the best mss.), the city of Tigranocerta was in Arzanene. The names and situation of the other three may be faintly traced.

<sup>n</sup> Compare Herodotus, I. i, c. 97, with Moses Choroneus. *Hist. Armen.* I. ii, c. 84, and the map of Armenia given by his editors.

<sup>o</sup> Hiberi, locorum potentes, Caspia viâ Sarmatam in Armenios raptim effundant. Tacit. *Annal.* vi, 35. See Strabon. *Geograph.* I. xi, p. 764.

<sup>p</sup> Peter Patricius (in *Excerpt. Leg.* p. 30) is the only writer who mentions the Iberian article of the treaty.

CHAP. joyed a profound tranquillity during forty years ;  
 XIII. and the treaty between the rival monarchies was  
 strictly observed till the death of Tiridates ; when  
 a new generation, animated with different views  
 and different passions, succeeded to the govern-  
 ment of the world ; and the grandson of Narses  
 undertook a long and memorable war against  
 the princes of the house of Constantine.

Triumph  
of Diocle-  
tian and  
Maximian,  
A. D. 303,  
Nov. 20.

The arduous work of rescuing the distressed empire from tyrants and barbarians had now been completely achieved by a succession of Illyrian peasants. As soon as Diocletian entered into the twentieth year of his reign, he celebrated that memorable era, as well as the success of his arms, by the pomp of a Roman triumph.<sup>4</sup> Maximian, the equal partner of his power, was his only companion in the glory of that day. The two Cæsars had fought and conquered, but the merit of their exploits was ascribed, according to the rigour of ancient maxims, to the auspicious influence of their fathers and emperors.<sup>5</sup> The triumph of Diocletian and Maximian was less magnificent, perhaps, than those of Aurelian and Probus, but it was dignified by several circumstances of superior fame and good fortune. Africa and Britain, the Rhine, the Danube, and the Nile, furnished their respective trophies ; but the most distinguished ornament was of a more

<sup>4</sup> Euseb. in Chron. Pagi ad anum. Till the discovery of the treatise *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, it was not certain that the triumph and the Vincenalia were celebrated at the same time.

<sup>5</sup> At the time of the Vincenalia, Galerius seems to have kept his station on the Danube. See Lactant. de M. P. 4. 38.

singular nature, a Persian victory followed by an important conquest. The representations of rivers, mountains, and provinces, were carried before the imperial car. The images of the captive wives, the sisters, and the children of the great king, afforded a new and grateful spectacle to the vanity of the people.<sup>s</sup> In the eyes of posterity this triumph is remarkable, by a distinction of a less honourable kind. It was the last that Rome ever beheld. Soon after this period, the emperors ceased to vanquish, and Rome ceased to be the capital of the empire.

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The spot on which Rome was founded, had been consecrated by ancient ceremonies and imaginary miracles. The presence of some god, or the memory of some hero, seemed to animate every part of the city, and the empire of the world had been promised to the capitol.<sup>t</sup> The native Romans felt and confessed the power of this agreeable illusion. It was derived from their ancestors, had grown up with their earliest habits of life, and was protected, in some measure, by the opinion of political utility. The form and the seat of government were intimately blended together, nor was it esteemed possible to transport the one without destroying the

Long ab-  
sence of the  
emperors  
from Rome.

<sup>s</sup> Eutropius (ix, 27) mentions them as a part of the triumph. As the *persons* had been restored to Narses, nothing more than their *images* could be exhibited.

<sup>t</sup> Livy gives us a speech of Camillus on that subject (v, 51-55), full of eloquence and sensibility, in opposition to a design of removing the seat of government from Rome to the neighbouring city of Veii.

CHAP. XIII. other.<sup>4</sup> But the sovereignty of the capital was gradually annihilated in the extent of conquest ; the provinces rose to the same level, and the vanquished nations acquired the name and privileges, without imbibing the partial affections, of Romans. During a long period, however, the remains of the ancient constitution, and the influence of custom, preserved the dignity of Rome. The emperors, though perhaps of African or Illyrian extraction, respected their adopted country, as the seat of their power, and the centre of their extensive dominions. The emergencies of war very frequently required their presence on the frontiers ; but Diocletian and Maximian were the first Roman princes who fixed, in time of peace, their ordinary residence in the provinces ; and their conduct, however it might be suggested by private motives, was justified by very specious considerations of policy.

Their residence at Milan, The court of the emperor of the West was, for the most part, established at Milan, whose situation, at the foot of the Alps, appeared far more convenient than that of Rome, for the important purpose of watching the motions of the barbarians of Germany. Milan soon assumed the splendour of an imperial city. The houses are described as numerous and well-

<sup>4</sup> Julius Cæsar was reproached with the intention of removing the empire to Ilium or Alexandria. See Sueton. in Cæsar, c. 79. According to the ingenious conjecture of Le Fevre and Dacier, the third ode of the third book of Horace was intended to divert Augustus from the execution of a similar design.

built; the manners of the people as polished and liberal. A circus, a theatre, a mint, a palace, baths, which bore the name of their founder Maximian; porticoes adorned with statues, and a double circumference of walls, contributed to the beauty of the new capital; nor did it seem oppressed even by the proximity of Rome.<sup>x</sup> To rival the majesty of Rome was the ambition likewise of Diocletian, who employed his leisure, and the wealth of the East, in the embellishment of Nicomedia, a city placed on the verge of Europe and Asia, almost at an equal distance between the Danube and the Euphrates. By the taste of the monarch, and at the expence of the people, Nicomedia acquired, in the space of a few years, a degree of magnificence which might appear to have required the labour of ages, and became inferior only to Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, in extent or populousness.<sup>y</sup> The life of Diocletian and Maximian was a life of action, and a considerable portion of it was

<sup>x</sup> See Aurelius Victor, who likewise mentions the buildings erected by Maximian at Carthage, probably during the Moorish war. We shall insert some verses of Ausonius de Clar. Urb. v.

Et Mediolani mira omni: copia rerum;  
 Innumeræ cultæque domus; facunda virorum  
 Ingenia, et mores laeti, tum duplice mure  
 Amplificata loci species; populique voluptas  
 Circus; et inclusi moles cuneata Theatri  
 Templa, Palatinæque arces opulensque Moneta,  
 Et Regio *Herculei* celebri sub honore lavacri.  
 Cunctaque mormoreis ornata Perystyla signis;  
 Mæniaque in valli formam circumdata labro,  
 Omnia quæ magnis operum velut ænula formis  
 Excellunt; nec juncta premit vicinia Romæ.

<sup>y</sup> Lactant. de M. P. c. 17. Libanius, Crat. viii, p. 203.

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spent in camps, or in their long and frequent marches; but whenever the public business allowed them any relaxation, they seem to have retired with pleasure to their favourite residences of Nicomedia and Milan. Till Diocletian, in the twentieth year of his reign, celebrated his Roman triumph, it is extremely doubtful whether he ever visited the ancient capital of the empire. Even on that memorable occasion his stay did not exceed two months. Disgusted with the licentious familiarity of the people, he quitted Rome with precipitation thirteen days before it was expected that he should have appeared in the senate, invested with the ensigns of the consular dignity.<sup>2</sup>

Debase-  
ment of  
Rome and  
of the se-  
nate.

The dislike expressed by Diocletian towards Rome and Roman freedom, was not the effect of momentary caprice, but the result of the most artful policy. That crafty prince had framed a new system of imperial government, which was afterwards completed by the family of Constantine; and as the image of the old constitution was religiously preserved in the senate, he resolved to deprive that order of its small remains of power and consideration. We may recollect, about eight years before the elevation of Diocletian, the transient greatness, and the ambitious hopes, of the Roman senate. As long as that enthusiasm prevailed, many of the nobles

<sup>2</sup> Lactant. de M. P. c. 17. On a similar occasion, Ammianus mentions the *dicacitas plebis*, as not very agreeable to an imperial ear. (See l. xvi, c. 10.)

imprudently displayed their zeal in the cause of CHAP. freedom ; and after the successors of Probus had XIII. withdrawn their countenance from the republican party, the senators were unable to disguise their impotent resentment. As the sovereign of Italy, Maximian was intrusted with the care of extinguishing this troublesome, rather than dangerous, spirit, and the task was perfectly suited to his cruel temper. The most illustrious members of the senate, whom Diocletian always affected to esteem, were involved, by his colleague, in the accusation of imaginary plots ; and the possession of an elegant villa, or a well-cultivated estate, was interpreted as a convincing evidence of guilt.\* The camp of the *prætorians*, which had so long oppressed, began to protect, the majesty of Rome ; and as those haughty troops were conscious of the decline of their power, they were naturally disposed to unite their strength with the authority of the senate. By the prudent measures of Diocletian, the numbers of the *prætorians* were insensibly reduced, their privileges abolished,<sup>b</sup> and their place supplied by New bodies of guards, two faithful legions of Illyricum, who, under Jovians and the new titles of Jovians and Herculians, were Herculians, appointed to perform the service of the imperial

\* Lactantius accuses Maximian of destroying fictis criminationibus lumen senatus (De M. P. c. 8). Aurelius Victor speaks very doubtfully of the faith of Diocletian towards his friends.

<sup>b</sup> Truncatæ vires urbis, imminuto prætoriarum cohortium atque in armis vulgi numero. Aurelius Victor. Lactantius attributes to Galerius the prosecution of the same plan (c. 26).

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guards.\* But the most fatal, though secret, wound, which the senate received from the hands of Diocletian and Maximian, was inflicted by the inevitable operation of their absence. As long as the emperors resided at Rome, that assembly might be oppressed, but it could scarcely be neglected. The successors of Augustus exercised the power of dictating whatever laws their wisdom or caprice might suggest; but those laws were ratified by the sanction of the senate. The model of ancient freedom was preserved in its deliberations and decrees; and wise princes, who respected the prejudices of the Roman people, were, in some measure, obliged to assume the language and behaviour suitable to the general and first magistrate of the republic. In the armies and in the provinces, they displayed the dignity of monarchs; and when they fixed their residence at a distance from the capital, they for ever laid aside the dissimulation which Augustus had recommended to his successors. In the exercise of the legislative as well as the executive power, the sovereign advised with his ministers, instead of consulting the great council of the nation. The name of the senate was mentioned with honour till the last period of the empire; the

\* They were old corps stationed in Illyricum; and, according to the ancient establishment, they each consisted of six thousand men. They had acquired much reputation by the use of the *plumbatae*, or darts loaded with lead. Each soldier carried five of these, which he darted from a considerable distance, with great strength and dexterity. See Vegetius, i, 17.

vanity of its members was still flattered with CHAP.  
honorary distinctions;<sup>d</sup> but the assembly which XIII.  
had so long been the source, and so long the instrument, of power was respectfully suffered to sink into oblivion. The senate of Rome, losing all connection with the imperial court and the actual constitution, was left a venerable, but useless, monument of antiquity on the Capitoline hill.

When the Roman princes had lost sight of the <sup>Civil magistracies</sup> senate and of their ancient capital, they easily laid aside, forgot the origin and nature of their legal power. The civil offices of consul, of proconsul, of censor, and of tribune, by the union of which it had been formed, betrayed to the people its republican extraction. Those modest titles were laid aside;<sup>e</sup> and if they still distinguished their high station by the appellation of emperor, or *imperator*, that word was understood in a new and more dignified sense, and no longer denoted the general of the Roman armies, but the sovereign of the Roman world. The name of emperor, which was at first of a military nature, was associated with another of a more servile kind. The epithet of *dominus*, or lord, in its primitive signification, was expressive, not of the authority of a prince over his subjects, or <sup>Imperial dignity and titles.</sup>

<sup>d</sup> See the Theodosian Code, I. vi, tit. ii, with Godefroy's commentary.

<sup>e</sup> See the twelfth dissertation in Spanheim's excellent work, *de Usu Numismatum*. From medals, inscriptions, and historians, he examines every title separately, and traces it from Augustus to the moment of its disappearing.

CHAP. XIII. of a commander over his soldiers, but of the despotic power of a master over his domestic slaves.<sup>1</sup> Viewing it in that odious light, it had been rejected with abhorrence by the first Cæsars. Their resistance insensibly became more feeble, and the name less odious; till at length the style of *our lord and emperor* was not only bestowed by flattery, but was regularly admitted into the laws and public monuments. Such lofty epithets were sufficient to elate and satisfy the most excessive vanity; and if the successors of Diocletian still declined the title of king, it seems to have been the effect, not so much of their moderation, as of their delicacy. Wherever the Latin tongue was in use (and it was the language of government throughout the empire), the imperial title, as it was peculiar to themselves, conveyed a more respectable idea than the name of king, which they must have shared with an hundred barbarian chieftains; or which, at the best, they could derive only from Romulus or from Tarquin. But the sentiments of the East were very different from those of the West. From the earliest period of history, the sovereigns of Asia had been celebrated in the Greek language by the title of *basileus*, or king; and since it was considered as the first distinction

<sup>1</sup> Pliny (in Panegyr. c. 3, 55, &c.) speaks of *dominus* with execration, as synonymous to tyrant, and opposite to prince. And the same Pliny regularly gives that title (in the tenth book of the epistles) to his friend rather than master, the virtuous Trajan. This strange contradiction puzzles the commentators, who think, and the translators, who can write.

among men, it was soon employed by the servile provincials of the East, in their humble addresses to the Roman throne.<sup>g</sup> Even the attributes, or at least the titles, of the *divinity* were usurped by Diocletian and Maximian, who transmitted them to a succession of christian emperors.<sup>h</sup> Such extravagant compliments, however, soon lose their impiety by losing their meaning; and when the ear is once accustomed to the sound, they are heard with indifference, as vague, though excessive, professions of respect.

From the time of Augustus to that of Diocletian, the Roman princes, conversing in a familiar manner among their fellow-citizens, were saluted only with the same respect that was usually paid to senators and magistrates. Their principal distinction was the imperial or military robe of purple; whilst the senatorial garment was marked by a broad, and the equestrian by a narrow, band or stripe of the same honourable colour. The pride, or rather the policy, of Diocletian, engaged that artful prince to introduce the stately magnificence of the court of Persia.<sup>i</sup> He ventured to assume the diadem, an ornament detested by the Romans as the odious ensign of royalty, and the use of which had been considered

<sup>g</sup> Synesius de Regno, Edit. Petav. p. 15. I am indebted for this quotation to the Abbé de la Bleterie.

<sup>h</sup> See Vendale de Consecratione, p. 354, &c. It was customary for the emperors to mention (in the preamble of laws) their *numen*, *sacred majesty*, *divine oracles*, &c. According to Tillemont, Gregory of Nazianzen complains most bitterly of the profanation, especially when it was practised by an Arian emperor.

<sup>i</sup> See Spanheim de Usu Numismat. Dissertat. vii.

CHAP. XIII. as the most desperate act of the madness of Caligula. It was no more than a broad white fillet set with pearls, which encircled the emperor's head. The sumptuous robes of Diocletian and his successors were of silk and gold; and it is remarked with indignation, that even their shoes were studded with the most precious gems. The access to their sacred person was every day rendered more difficult, by the institution of new forms and ceremonies. The avenues of the palace were strictly guarded by the various schools, as they began to be called, of domestic officers. The interior apartments were intrusted to the jealous vigilance of the eunuchs; the increase of whose numbers and influence was the most infallible symptom of the progress of despotism. When a subject was at length admitted to the imperial presence, he was obliged, whatever might be his rank, to fall prostrate on the ground, and to adore, according to the eastern fashion, the divinity of his lord and master.\* Diocletian was a man of sense, who, in the course of private as well as public life, had formed a just estimate both of himself and of mankind; nor is it easy to conceive, that in substituting the manners of Persia to those of Rome, he was seriously actuated by so mean a principle as that of vanity. He flattered himself, that an ostentation of splendour and luxury would subdue the imagination of the multitude; that the

\* *Aurelius Victor.* *Entropius*, ix, 26. It appears by the panegyrist, that the Romans were soon reconciled to the name and ceremony of adoration.

monarch would be less exposed to the rude licence of the people and the soldiers, as his person was secluded from the public view; and that habits of submission would insensibly be productive of sentiments of veneration. Like the modesty affected by Augustus, the state maintained by Diocletian was a theatrical representation; but it must be confessed, that of the two comedies, the former was of a much more liberal and manly character than the latter. It was the aim of the one to disguise, and the object of the other to display, the unbounded power which the emperors possessed over the Roman world.

Ostentation was the first principle of the new system instituted by Diocletian. The second was division. He divided the empire, the provinces, and every branch of the civil as well as military administration. He multiplied the wheels of the machine of government, and rendered its operations less rapid but more secure. Whatever advantages and whatever defects might attend these innovations, they must be ascribed in a very great degree to the first inventor; but as the new frame of policy was gradually improved and completed by succeeding princes, it will be more satisfactory to delay the consideration of it till the season of its full maturity and perfection.<sup>1</sup> Reserving, therefore, for the reign of Constan-

<sup>1</sup> The innovations introduced by Diocletian are chiefly deduced, 1st, from some very strong passages in Lactantius; and, 2dly, from the new and various offices which, in the Theodosian code, appear already established in the beginning of the reign of Constantine.

CHAP.  
XIII.

tine a more exact picture of the new empire, we shall content ourselves with describing the principal and decisive outline, as it was traced by the hand of Diocletian. He had associated three colleagues in the exercise of the supreme power; and as he was convinced that the abilities of a single man were inadequate to the public defence, he considered the joint administration of four princes, not as a temporary expedient, but as a fundamental law of the constitution. It was his intention, that the two elder princes should be distinguished by the use of the diadem, and the title of *Augusti*; that, as affection or esteem might direct their choice, they should regularly call to their assistance two subordinate colleagues; and that the *Cæsars*, rising in their turn to the first rank, should supply an uninterrupted succession of emperors. The empire was divided into four parts. The East and Italy were the most honourable, the Danube and the Rhine the most laborious stations. The former claimed the presence of the *Augusti*, the latter were intrusted to the administration of the *Cæsars*. The strength of the legions was in the hands of the four partners of sovereignty; and the despair of successively vanquishing four formidable rivals might intimidate the ambition of an aspiring general. In their civil government, the emperors were supposed to exercise the undivided power of the monarch, and their edicts, inscribed with their joint names, were received in all the provinces, as promulgated by their mutual councils and authority. Notwithstanding these precautions,

the political union of the Roman world was gradually dissolved, and a principle of division was introduced, which, in the course of a few years, occasioned the perpetual separation of the eastern and western empires.

The system of Diocletian was accompanied with another very material disadvantage, which cannot even at present be totally overlooked; a more expensive establishment, and consequently an increase of taxes, and the oppression of the people. Instead of a modest family of slaves and freedmen, such as had contented the simple greatness of Augustus and Trajan, three or four magnificent courts were established, in the various parts of the empire, and as many Roman *kings* contended with each other, and with the Persian monarch, for the vain superiority of pomp and luxury. The number of ministers, of magistrates, of officers, and of servants, who filled the different departments of the state, was multiplied beyond the example of former times; and (if we may borrow the warm expression of a contemporary) “when the proportion of those who received, exceeded the proportion of those who contributed, the provinces were oppressed by the weight of tributes.”<sup>11</sup> From this period to the extinction of the empire, it would be easy to deduce an uninterrupted series of clamours and complaints. According to his religion and situation, each writer chooses either Diocletian, or Constantine, or Valens, or Theodosius, for the

CHAP.  
XIII.

CHAP. object of his invectives ; but they unanimously  
XIII. agree in representing the burden of the public  
impositions, and particularly the land-tax and  
capitation, as the intolerable and increasing  
grievance of their own times. From such a con-  
currence, an impartial historian, who is obliged  
to extract truth from satire, as well as from pa-  
negyric, will be inclined to divide the blame  
among the princes whom they accuse, and to  
ascribe their exactions much less to their personal  
vices, than to the uniform system of their ad-  
ministration. The emperor Diocletian was indeed  
the author of that system ; but during his reign,  
the growing evil was confined within the bounds  
of modesty and discretion ; and he deserves the  
reproach of establishing pernicious precedents,  
rather than of exercising actual oppression.<sup>11</sup> It  
may be added, that his revenues were managed  
with prudent economy ; and that after all the  
current expences were discharged, there still re-  
mained in the imperial treasury an ample provi-  
sion either for judicious liberality or for any  
emergency of the state.

Abdication  
of Diocle-  
tian and  
Maximian.

It was in the twenty-first year of his reign that Diocletian executed his memorable resolution of abdicating the empire ; an action more naturally to have been expected from the elder or the younger Antoninus, than from a prince who had never practised the lessons of philosophy either in the attainment or in the use of supreme power.

<sup>11</sup> *Indicta lex nova quæ sane illorum temporum modestiæ tolerabilis, in perniciem processit.* Aurel. Victor, who has treated the character of Diocletian with good sense, though in bad Latin.

Diocletian acquired the glory of giving to the world the first example of a resignation,<sup>o</sup> which has not been very frequently imitated by succeeding monarchs. The parallel of Charles the fifth, however, will naturally offer itself to our mind, not only since the eloquence of a modern historian has rendered that name so familiar to an English reader, but from the very striking resemblance between the characters of the two emperors, whose political abilities were superior to their military genius, and whose specious virtues were much less the effect of nature than of art. The abdication of Charles appears to have been hastened by the vicissitudes of fortune; and the disappointment of his favourite schemes urged him to relinquish a power which he found inadequate to his ambition. But the reign of Diocletian had flowed with a tide of uninterrupted success; nor was it till after he had vanquished all his enemies, and accomplished all his designs, that he seems to have entertained any serious thoughts of resigning the empire. Neither Charles nor Diocletian were arrived at a very advanced period of life; since the one was only fifty-five, and the other was no more than fifty-nine years of age; but the active life of those princes, their wars and journeys, the cares of royalty, and their application to business, had

XIII.

Resem-  
blance to  
Charles the  
fifth.

<sup>o</sup> *Solus omnium, post conditum Romanum imperium, qui ex tanto fastigio sponte ad privatæ vitæ statum civilitatemque remearet. Eutrop. ix, 28.*

CHAP.  
XIII.A. D. 304.  
Long ill-  
ness of  
Diocletian.

already impaired their constitution, and brought on the infirmities of a premature old age.<sup>p</sup>

Notwithstanding the severity of a very cold and rainy winter, Diocletian left Italy soon after the ceremony of his triumph, and began his progress towards the East round the circuit of the Illyrian provinces. From the inclemency of the weather, and the fatigue of the journey, he soon contracted a slow illness; and though he made easy marches, and was generally carried in a close litter, his disorder, before he arrived at Nicomedia, about the end of the summer, was become very serious and alarming. During the whole winter he was confined to his palace; his danger inspired a general and unaffected concern; but the people could only judge of the various alterations of his health, from the joy or consternation which they discovered in the countenances and behaviour of his attendants. The rumour of his death was for some time universally believed, and it was supposed to be concealed, with a view to prevent the troubles that might have happened during the absence of the Caesar Galerius. At length, however, on the first of March, Diocletian once more appeared in public, but so pale and emaciated, that he could scarcely have been recognised by those to whom his person was the most familiar. It was time to put an end to the painful struggle, which he had

His pru-  
dence.

<sup>p</sup> The particulars of the journey and illness are taken from Lactan-  
tius (c. 17), who may *sometimes* be admitted as an evidence of public  
facts, though very seldom of private anecdotes.

sustained during more than a year, between the care of his health and that of his dignity. The former required indulgence and relaxation; the latter compelled him to direct, from the bed of sickness, the administration of a great empire. He resolved to pass the remainder of his days in honourable repose, to place his glory beyond the reach of fortune, and to relinquish the theatre of the world to his younger and more active associates.<sup>4</sup>

The ceremony of his abdication was performed in a spacious plain, about three miles from Nicomedia. The emperor ascended a lofty throne, and in a speech, full of reason and dignity, declared his intention, both to the people and to the soldiers who were assembled on this extraordinary occasion. As soon as he had divested himself of the purple, he withdrew from the gazing multitude; and traversing the city in a covered chariot, proceeded, without delay, to the favourite retirement which he had chosen in his native country of Dalmatia. On the same day, which was the first of May,<sup>5</sup> Maximian, as it had been previously concerted, made his resignation of the imperial dignity at Milan.

<sup>4</sup> Aurelius Victor ascribes the abdication, which had been so variously accounted for, to two causes. 1st, Diocletian's contempt of ambition; and, 2dly, His apprehension of impending troubles. One of the panegyrics (vi, 9) mentions the age and infirmities of Diocletian as a very natural reason for his retirement.

<sup>5</sup> The difficulties, as well as mistakes, attending the dates, both of the year and of the day of Diocletian's abdication, are perfectly cleared up by Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv, p. 525, note 19), and by Pagi ad annum.

CHAP. Even in the splendour of the Roman triumph,  
 XIII. Diocletian had meditated his design of abdicating the government. As he wished to secure the obedience of Maximian, he exacted from him, either a general assurance that he would submit his actions to the authority of his benefactor, or a particular promise that he would descend from the throne, whenever he should receive the advice and the example. This engagement, though it was confirmed by the solemnity of an oath before the altar of the Capitoline Jupiter,<sup>\*</sup> would have proved a feeble restraint on the fierce temper of Maximian, whose passion was the love of power, and who neither desired present tranquillity nor future reputation. But he yielded, however reluctantly, to the ascendant which his wiser colleague had acquired over him, and retired, immediately after his abdication, to a villa in Lucania, where it was almost impossible that such an impatient spirit could find any lasting tranquillity.

Retirement  
of Diocle-  
tian at Sa-  
tona.

Diocletian, who, from a servile origin, had raised himself to the throne, passed the nine last years of his life in a private condition. Reason had dictated, and content seems to have accompanied, his retreat, in which he enjoyed for a long time the respect of those princes to whom he had resigned the possession of the world.<sup>t</sup>

\* See Panegyr. Veter. vi, 9. The oration was pronounced after Maximian had re-assumed the purple.

<sup>t</sup> Eumenius pays him a very fine compliment: “ At enim divinum illum virum, qui primus imperium et participavit et posuit, con-

It is seldom that minds, long exercised in business, have formed any habits of conversing with themselves, and in the loss of power they principally regret the want of occupation. The amusements of letters and of devotion, which afford so many resources in solitude, were incapable of fixing the attention of Diocletian; but he had preserved, or at least he soon recovered, a taste for the most innocent as well as natural pleasures; and his leisure hours were sufficiently employed in building, planting, and gardening. His answer to Maximian is deservedly celebrated. He was solicited by that restless old man to re-  
assume the reins of government and the imperial purple. He rejected the temptation with a smile of pity, calmly observing, that if he could shew Maximian the cabbages which he had planted with his own hands at Salona, he should no longer be urged to relinquish the enjoyment of happiness for the pursuit of power.<sup>1</sup> In his conversations with his friends, he frequently acknowledged, that of all arts, the most difficult was the art of reigning; and he expressed himself on that favourite topic with a degree of warmth which could be the result only of experience. "How often," was he accustomed to say, "is it the interest of four or five ministers to combine together to deceive their sove-

" sed et facti sui non paenitet; nec amisisse se putat quod sponte transcriptis felix beatusque vere quem vestra, tantorum principum, colunt obsequia privatum." Panegyr. Vet. vii, 15.

<sup>1</sup> We are obliged to the younger Victor for this celebrated bon mot. Eutropius mentions the thing in a more general manner.

CHAP. " reign ! Secluded from mankind by his exalted  
XIII. " dignity, the truth is concealed from his know-  
ledge; he can see only with their eyes, he  
" hears nothing but their misrepresentations.  
" He confers the most important offices upon  
" vice and weakness, and disgraces the most  
" virtuous and deserving among his subjects.  
" By such infamous arts," added Diocletian, " the  
" best and wisest princes are sold to the venal  
" corruption of their courtiers."<sup>x</sup> A just es-  
timate of greatness, and the assurance of im-  
mortal fame, improve our relish for the plea-  
sures of retirement; but the Roman emperor  
had filled too important a character in the world,  
to enjoy without alloy the comforts and security  
of a private condition. It was impossible that  
he could remain ignorant of the troubles which  
afflicted the empire after his abdication. It was  
impossible that he could be indifferent to their  
consequences. Fear, sorrow, and discontent,  
sometimes pursued him into the solitude of Sa-  
lona. His tenderness, or at least his pride, was  
deeply wounded by the misfortunes of his wife  
and daughter; and the last moments of Diocle-  
tian were embittered by some affronts which  
Licinius and Constantine might have spared the  
father of so many emperors, and the first author  
and death, of their own fortune. A report, though of a very  
A. D. 313. doubtful nature, has reached our times, that he

<sup>x</sup> Hist. August. p. 223, 224. Vopiscus had learned this conver-  
sation from his father.

prudently withdrew himself from their power by CHAP.  
XIII.  
a voluntary death.<sup>y</sup>

Before we dismiss the consideration of the life and character of Diocletian, we may, for a moment, direct our view to the place of his retirement. Salona, a principal city of his native province of Dalmatia was near two hundred Roman miles (according to the measurement of the public highways) from Aquileia and the confines of Italy, and about two hundred and seventy from Surmum, the usual residence of the emperors whenever they visited the Illyrian frontier.<sup>z</sup> A miserable village still preserves the name of Salona; but so late as the sixteenth century, the remains of a theatre, and a confused prospect of broken arches and marble columns, continued to attest its ancient splendour.<sup>a</sup> About six or seven miles from the city, Diocletian constructed a magnificent palace; and we may infer, from the greatness of the work, how long he had meditated his design of abdicating the empire. The choice of a spot which united all that could contribute either to health or to luxury did not

Descrip-  
tion of Sa-  
lona and  
the adja-  
cent coun-

<sup>y</sup> The younger Victor slightly mentions the report. But as Diocletian had disengaged a powerful and successful party, his memory has been loaded with every crime and misfortune. It has been affirmed, that he died raving mad, that he was condemned as a criminal by the Roman senate, &c.

<sup>z</sup> See the Itiner. p. 269, 272. Edit. Wessel.

The Abate Fortis, in his Viaggio in Dalmazia, p. 43 (printed at Venice in the year 1774, in two small volumes in quarto), quotes a s. account of the antiquities of Salona, composed by Giambartista Giustiani about the middle of the sixteenth century.

CHAP. require the partiality of a native. " The soil  
XIII. " was dry and fertile, the air is pure and whole-  
" some ; and though extremely hot during the  
" summer months, this country seldom feels  
" those sultry and noxious winds, to which the  
" coasts of Istria and some parts of Italy are ex-  
" posed. The views from the palace are no less  
" beautiful than the soil and climate were in-  
" viting. Towards the west lies the fertile  
" shore that stretches along the Hadriatic, in  
" which a number of small islands are scattered  
" in such a manner as to give this part of the  
" sea the appearance of a great lake. On the  
" north side lies the bay, which led to the ancient  
" city of Salona ; and the country beyond it,  
" appearing in sight, forms a proper contrast to  
" that more extensive prospect of water, which  
" the Hadriatic presents both to the south and  
" to the east. Towards the north, the view is  
" terminated by high and irregular mountains,  
" situated at a proper distance, and, in many  
" places, covered with villages, woods, and vine-  
" yards."<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup> Adam's Antiquities of Diocletian's Palace at Spalato, p. 6. We may add a circumstance or two from the Abat. Fortis ; the little stream of the Hyader, mentioned by Lucan, produces most excellent trout, which a sagacious writer, perhaps a monk, supposes to have been one of the principal reasons that determined Diocletian in the choice of his retirement. Fortis, p. 45. The same author (p. 38) observes, that a taste for agriculture is reviving at Spalato, and that an experimental farm has lately been established near the city, by a society of gentlemen.

Though Constantine, from a very obvious prejudice, affects to mention the palace of Diocletian with contempt,<sup>c</sup> yet one of their successors, who could only see it in a neglected and mutilated state, celebrates its magnificence in terms of the highest admiration.<sup>d</sup> It covered an extent of ground consisting of between nine and ten English acres. The form was quadrangular, flanked with sixteen towers. Two of the sides were near six hundred, and the other two near seven hundred, feet in length. The whole was constructed of a beautiful freestone, extracted from the neighbouring quarries of Trau, or Tragutium, and very little inferior to marble itself. Four streets, intersecting each other at right angles, divided the several parts of this great edifice; and the approach to the principal apartment was from a very stately entrance, which is still denominated the golden gate. The approach was terminated by a *peristylum* of granite columns, on one side of which we discover the square temple of Æsculapius, on the other the octagon temple of Jupiter. The latter of those deities, Diocletian revered as the patron of his fortunes, the former as the protector of his health. By comparing the present remains with the precepts of Vitruvius, the several parts of the building, the baths, bed-chamber, the *atrium*, the *basilica*, and the Cyzicene, Corinthian, and Egyp-

<sup>c</sup> Constant. Orat. ad Cœtum Sanct. c. 25. In this sermon, the emperor, or the bishop who composed it for him, affects to relate the miserable end of all the persecutors of the church.

<sup>d</sup> Constant. Porphy. de Statu Imper. p. 86.

CHAP. tian halls have been described with some degree  
XIII. of precision, or at least of probability. Their  
..... forms were various, their proportions just; but  
they were all attended with two imperfections,  
very repugnant to our modern notions of taste  
and conveniency. These stately rooms had neit-  
ther windows nor chimnies. They were lighted  
from the top (for the building seems to have  
consisted of no more than one story), and they  
received their heat by the help of pipes that  
were conveyed along the walls. The range of  
principal apartments was protected towards the  
south-west by a portico of five hundred and  
seventeen feet long, which must have formed a  
very noble and delightful walk, when the beau-  
ties of painting and sculpture were added to those  
of the prospect.

Had this magnificent edifice remained in a soli-  
tary country, it would have been exposed to the  
ravages of time; but it might, perhaps, have  
escaped the rapacious industry of man. The  
village of Aspalathus,<sup>e</sup> and, long afterwards, the  
provincial town of Spalatro, had grown out of  
its ruins. The golden gate now opens into the  
market-place. St. John the baptist has usurped  
the honours of Aesculapius; and the temple of  
Jupiter, under the protection of the virgin, is  
converted into the cathedral church. For this  
account of Diocletian's palace, we are principally  
indebted to an ingenious artist of our own time  
and country, whom a very liberal curiosity car-

<sup>e</sup> D'Anville, *Geographie Ancienne*, tom. i, p. 162,

ried into the heart of Dalmatia.<sup>f</sup> But there is room to suspect, that the elegance of his designs and engraving has somewhat flattered the objects which it was their purpose to represent. We are informed by a more recent and very judicious traveller, that the awful ruins of Spalatro are not less expressive of the decline of the arts, than of the greatness of the Roman empire in the time of Diocletian.<sup>g</sup> If such was indeed the state of architecture, we must naturally believe that painting and sculpture had experienced a still more sensible decay. The practice of architecture is directed by a few general and even mechanical rules. But sculpture, and, above all, painting, propose to themselves the imitation not only of the forms of nature, but of the characters and passions of the human soul. In those sublime arts, the dexterity of the hand is of little avail, unless it is animated by fancy, and guided by the most correct taste and observation.

It is almost unnecessary to remark, that the civil distractions of the empire, the licence of the soldiers, the inroads of the barbarians, and

<sup>f</sup> Messieurs Adam and Clarisseau, attended by two draughtsmen, visited Spalatro in the month of July 1757. The magnificent work which their journey produced, was published in London seven years afterwards.

<sup>g</sup> I shall quote the words of the Abate Fortis. " E' bastevolmente nota agli amatori dell' architettura, e dell' antichita, l' opera del Signor Adams, che a donato molto a que' superbi vestigi coll' abituale eleganza del suo toccalapis e del bulino. In generale la rozzezza del scalpello, e'l cativo gusto del secolo vi gareggiano colla magnificenza del fabricato." See Viaggio in Dalmazia, p. 40.

CHAP. the progress of despotism, had proved very un-  
XIII. favourable to genius, and even to learning. The succession of Illyrian princes restored the empire, without restoring the sciences. Their military education was not calculated to inspire them with the love of letters; and even the mind of Diocletian, however active and capacious in business, was totally uninformed by study or speculation. The professions of law and physic are of such common use and certain profit, that they will always secure a sufficient number of practitioners, endowed with a reasonable degree of abilities and knowledge; but it does not appear that the students in those two faculties appeal to any celebrated masters who have flourished within that period. The voice of poetry was silent. History was reduced to dry and confused abridgments, alike destitute of amusement and instruction. A languid and affected eloquence was still retained in the pay and service of the emperors, who encouraged not any arts except those which contributed to the gratification of their pride, or the defence of their power.<sup>h</sup>

The new  
platonists.

The declining age of learning and of mankind is marked, however, by the rise and rapid progress of the new platonists. The school of

<sup>h</sup> The orator Eumenius was secretary to the emperors Maximian and Constantius, and professor of rhetoric in the college of Antun. His salary was six hundred thousand sesterces, which, according to the lowest computation of that age, must have exceeded three thousand pounds a year. He generously requested the permission of employing it in rebuilding the college. See his *Oration de restaurandis scholis*; which, though not exempt from vanity, may atone for his panegyrics.

Alexandria silenced those of Athens; and the ancient sects inrolled themselves under the banners of the more fashionable teachers, who recommended their system by the novelty of their method, and the austerity of their manners. Several of these masters, Ammonius, Plotinus, Amelius, and Porphyry,<sup>1</sup> were men of profound thought and intense application; but by mistaking the true object of philosophy, their labours contributed much less to improve, than to corrupt the human understanding. The knowledge that is suited to our situation and powers, the whole-compass of moral, natural, and mathematical, science, was neglected by the new platonists; while they exhausted their strength in the verbal disputes of metaphysics, attempted to explore the secrets of the invisible world, and studied to reconcile Aristotle with Plato, on subjects of which both these philosophers were as ignorant as the rest of mankind. Consuming their reason in these deep but unsubstantial meditations, their minds were exposed to illusions of fancy. They flattered themselves that they possessed the secret of disengaging the soul from its corporeal prison; claimed a familiar intercourse with daemons and spirits; and by a very singular revolution, converted the study of philosophy into that of magic. The ancient sages

<sup>1</sup> Porphyry died about the time of Diocletian's abdication. The life of his master Plotinus, which he composed, will give us the most complete idea of the genius of the sect and the manners of its professors. This very curious piece is inserted in Fabricius, *Bibliotheca Graeca*, tom. iv, p. 88-142.

CHAP. XIII. had derided the popular superstition; after dis-  
guising its extravagance by the thin pretence of  
allegory, the disciples of Plotinus and Porphyry  
became its most zealous defenders. As they  
agreed with the christians in a few mysterious  
points of faith, they attacked the remainder of  
their theological system with all the fury of civil  
war. The new platonists would scarcely deserve  
a place in the history of science, but in that of  
the church the mention of them will very fre-  
quently occur.

## CHAP. XIV

*Troubles after the abdication of Diocletian.—Death of Constantius.—Elevation of Constantine and Maxentius.—Six emperors at the same time.—Death of Maximian and Galerius.—Victories of Constantine over Maxentius and Licinius.—Re-union of the empire under the authority of Constantine.*

THE balance of power established by Diocletian subsisted no longer than while it was sustained by the firm and dexterous hand of the founder. It required such a fortunate mixture of different tempers and abilities, as could scarcely be found or even expected a second time; two emperors without jealousy, two Cæsars without ambition, and the same general interest invariably pursued by four independent princes. The abdication of Diocletian and Maximian was succeeded by eighteen years of discord and confusion; the empire was afflicted by five civil wars; and the remainder of the time was not so much a state of tranquillity as a suspension of arms between several hostile monarchs, who, viewing each other with an eye of fear and hatred, strove to increase their respective forces at the expence of their subjects.

As soon as Diocletian and Maximian had resigned the purple, their station, according to the rules of the new constitution, was filled by the

Character  
and situa-  
tion of  
Constan-  
tius.

CHAP. two Cæsars, Constantius and Galerius, who immediately assumed the title of Augustus.<sup>a</sup> The honours of seniority and precedence were allowed to the former of those princes, and he continued, under a new appellation, to administer his ancient department of Gaul, Spain, and Britain. The government of those ample provinces was sufficient to exercise his talents, and to satisfy his ambition. Clemency, temperance, and moderation, distinguished the amiable character of Constantius; and his fortunate subjects had frequently occasion to compare the virtues of their sovereign with the passions of Maximian, and even with the arts of Diocletian.<sup>b</sup> Instead of imitating their eastern pride and magnificence, Constantius preserved the modesty of a Roman prince. He declared, with unaffected sincerity, that his most valued treasure was in the hearts of his people; and that, whenever the dignity of the throne, or the danger of the state, required any extraordinary supply, he could depend with confidence on their gratitude and liberality.<sup>c</sup> The

<sup>a</sup> M. de Montesquieu (*Considérations sur la Grandeur et la Décadence des Romains*, c. 17) supposes, on the authority of Orosius and Eusebius, that, on this occasion, the empire, for the first time, was *really* divided into two parts. It is difficult, however, to discover in what respect the plan of Galerius differed from that of Diocletian.

<sup>b</sup> *Hic non modo amabilis, sed etiam venerabilis Gallis fuit; præcipue quod Diocletiani suspectam prudentiam, ex Maximiani sanguinariam violentiam imperio ejus evaserant.* Eutrop. Bréviar. x. 1.

<sup>c</sup> *Divitiis provincialium (mel. provinciarum) ac privatorum studens, hisci commoda non admodum affectans; ducensque melius publicas*

provincials of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, sensible <sup>CHAP.</sup> <sub>XIV.</sub> of his worth, and of their own happiness, reflected with anxiety on the declining health of the emperor Constantius, and the tender age of his numerous family, the issue of his second marriage with the daughter of Maximian.

The stern temper of Galerius was cast in a <sup>Of Galerius.</sup> very different mould; and while he commanded the esteem of his subjects, he seldom condescended to solicit their affections. His fame in arms, and, above all, the success of the Persian war, had elated his haughty mind, which was naturally impatient of a superior, or even of an equal. If it were possible to rely on the partial testimony of an injudicious writer, we might ascribe the abdication of Diocletian to the menaces of Galerius, and relate the particulars of a *private* conversation between the two princes, in which the former discovered as much pusillanimity as the latter displayed ingratitudo and arrogance.<sup>a</sup> But these obscure anecdotes are sufficiently refuted by an impartial view of the character and conduct of Diocletian. Whatever might otherwise have been his intentions, if he had apprehended

opes a privatis habet, quam intra unum claustrum reservari. Id. Ibid.  
He carried this maxim so far, that whenever he gave an entertainment, he was obliged to borrow a service of plate.

<sup>a</sup> Lactantius de Mort. Persecutor. c. 18. Were the particulars of this conference more consistent with truth and decency, we might still ask, how they came to the knowledge of an obscure rhetorician? But there are many historians who put us in mind of the admirable saying of the great Condé to cardinal de Retz: " Ces coquins nous sont " " parler et agir, comme ils auroient fait eux-memes à notre place."

CHAP. any danger from the violence of Galerius, his good  
XIV. sense would have instructed him to prevent the  
ignominious contest; and as he had held the  
sceptre with glory, he would have resigned it  
without disgrace.

The two Cæsars, Se-  
verus and Maximian. After the elevation of Constantius and Galerius  
to the rank of *Augusti*, two new *Cæsars* were re-  
quired to supply their place, and to complete  
the system of the imperial government. Diocletian was sincerely desirous of withdrawing him-  
self from the world; he considered Galerius, who  
had married his daughter, as the firmest support  
of his family and of the empire; and he con-  
sented, without reluctance, that his successor  
should assume the merit as well as the envy of  
the important nomination. It was fixed without  
consulting the interest or inclination of the princes  
of the West. Each of them had a son who was  
arrived at the age of manhood, and who might  
have been deemed the most natural candidates  
for the vacant honour. But the impotent resent-  
ment of Maximian was no longer to be dreaded;  
and the moderate Constantius, though he might  
despise the dangers, was humanely apprehensive  
of the calamities, of civil war. The two persons  
whom Galerius promoted to the rank of *Cæsar*  
were much better suited to serve the views of his  
ambition; and their principal recommendation  
seems to have consisted in the want of merit or  
personal consequence. The first of these was  
Daza, or, as he was afterwards called, Maximian,  
whose mother was the sister of Galerius. The

unexperienced youth still betrayed by his manners and language his rustic education, when, to his own astonishment as well as that of the world, he was invested by Diocletian with the purple, exalted to the dignity of Cæsar, and intrusted with the sovereign command of Egypt and Syria.<sup>a</sup> At the same time, Severus, a faithful servant, addicted to pleasure, but not incapable of business, was sent to Milan, to receive from the reluctant hands of Maximian the Cæsarean ornaments, and the possession of Italy and Africa.<sup>b</sup> According to the forms of the constitution, Severus acknowledged the supremacy of the western emperor; but he was absolutely devoted to the commands of his benefactor Galerius, who, reserving to himself the intermediate countries from the confines of Italy to those of Syria, firmly established his power over three-fourths of the monarchy. In the full confidence, that the approaching death of Constantius would leave him sole master of the Roman world, we are assured that he had arranged in his mind a long succession of future princes, and that he meditated his own retreat from public life, after he should have accomplished a glorious reign of about twenty years.<sup>c</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Silanus nuper a pecoribus et silvis (says Lactantius de M. P. c. 19), statim scutarius, continuo protector, mox tribunos, postridie Caesar, accepit Orientem. Aurelius Victor is too liberal in giving him the whole portion of Diocletian.

<sup>b</sup> His diligence and fidelity are acknowledged even by Lactantius, de M. P. c. 18.

<sup>c</sup> These schemes, however, rest only on the very doubtful authority of Lactantius, de M. P. c. 20.

## C H A P.

## XIV.

Ambition  
of Galerius  
disappoint-  
ed by two  
revolu-  
tions.

Birth, edu-  
cation, and  
escape, of  
Constan-  
tine,  
A. D. 274.

But within less than eighteen months, two unexpected revolutions overturned the ambitious schemes of Galerius. The hopes of uniting the western provinces to his empire were disappointed by the elevation of Constantine, whilst Italy and Africa were lost by the successful revolt of Maxentius.

1. The fame of Constantine has rendered posterity attentive to the most minute circumstances of his life and actions. The place of his birth, as well as the condition of his mother Helena, have been the subject not only of literary but of national disputes. Notwithstanding the recent tradition, which assigns for her father a British king, we are obliged to confess, that Helena was the daughter of an innkeeper;<sup>b</sup> but at the same time we may defend the legality of her marriage against those who have represented her as the concubine of Constantius.<sup>1</sup> The great Constantine was most probably born at Naissus, in Da-

<sup>b</sup> This tradition, unknown to the contemporaries of Constantine, was invented in the darkness of monasteries, was embellished by Jeffrey of Monmouth and the writers of the twelfth century, has been defended by our antiquarians of the last age, and is seriously related in the ponderous history of England, compiled by Mr. Carte (vol. i, p. 147). He transports, however, the kingdom of Coe, the imaginary father of Helena, from Essex to the wall of Antoninus.

<sup>1</sup> Eutropius (x, 2) expresses, in a few words, the real truth, and the occasion of the error, “*ex obscuriori matrimonio ejus filius*.” Zosimus (l. ii, p. 78) eagerly seized the most unfavourable report, and is followed by Orosius (vii, 25), whose authority is oddly enough overlooked by the indefatigable but partial Tillemont. By insisting on the divorce of Helena, Diocletian acknowledged her marriage.

cia;<sup>k</sup> and it is not surprising, that in a family CHAP.  
and province distinguished only by the profession XIV.  
of arms, the youth should discover very little in-  
clination to improve his mind by the acquisition  
of knowledge.<sup>1</sup> He was about eighteen years  
of age when his father was promoted to the rank  
of Cæsar; but that fortunate event was attended  
with his mother's divorce; and the splendour of  
an imperial alliance reduced the son of Helena  
to a state of disgrace and humiliation. Instead  
of following Constantius in the West, he re-  
mained in the service of Diocletian, signalized his  
valour in the wars of Egypt and Persia, and

\* There are three opinions with regard to the place of Constantine's birth. 1. Our English antiquarians were used to dwell with rapture on the words of his panegyrist, "Britannias illic oriendo no-  
" biles fecisti." But this celebrated passage may be referred with as  
much propriety to the accession as to the nativity of Constantine.  
2. Some of the modern Greeks have ascribed the honour of his birth  
to Drepanum, a town on the gulf of Nicomedia (Cellarius, tom. ii,  
p. 174), which Constantine dignified with the name of Helenopolis,  
and Justinian adorned with many splendid buildings (Procop. de  
Edificiis, v, 2). It is indeed probable enough, that Helena's father  
kept an inn at Drepanum; and that Constantius might lodge there  
when he returned from a Persian embassy in the reign of Aurelian.  
But in the wandering life of a soldier, the place of his marriage, and  
the places where his children are born, have very little connection  
with each other. 3. The claim of Naissus is supported by the anonymous writer, published at the end of Ammianus, p. 710, and who  
is general copied very good materials; and it is confirmed by Julius  
Firmicus (de Astrologia, l. i, c. 4), who flourished under the reign  
of Constantine himself. Some objections have been raised against  
the integrity of the text, and the application of the passage of Firmi-  
cius; but the former is established by the best mss. and the latter is  
very ably defended by Lipsus de Magnitudine Romana, l. iv, c. 11,  
et Supplement.

<sup>1</sup> Literis minus instructus. Anonym. ad Ammian. p. 710.

CHAP. gradually rose to the honourable station of a tribune of the first order. The figure of Constantine was tall and majestic; he was dextrous in all his exercises, intrepid in war, affable in peace; in his whole conduct, the active spirit of youth was tempered by habitual prudence; and while his mind was engrossed by ambition, he appeared cold and insensible to the allurements of pleasure. The favour of the people and soldiers, who had named him as a worthy candidate for the rank of Cæsar, served only to exasperate the jealousy of Galerius; and though prudence might restrain him from exercising any open violence, an absolute monarch is seldom at a loss how to execute a sure and secret revenge.<sup>m</sup> Every hour increased the danger of Constantine, and the anxiety of his father, who, by repeated letters, expressed the warmest desire of embracing his son. For some time the policy of Galerius supplied him with delays and excuses, but it was impossible long to refuse so natural a request of his associate, without maintaining his refusal by arms. The permission of the journey was reluctantly granted, and whatever precautions the emperor might have taken to intercept a return, the consequences of which he, with so much reason, apprehended, they were effectually disappointed by the incre-

<sup>m</sup> Galerius, or perhaps his own courage, exposed him to single combat with a Sarmatian (Anonym. p. 710) and with a monstrous lion. See Praxagoras apud Phocum, p. 63. Praxagoras, an Athenian philosopher, had written a life of Constantine, in two books, which are now lost. He was a contemporary.

dible diligence of Constantine.<sup>n</sup> Leaving the CHAP.  
palace of Nicomedia in the night, he travelled XIV.  
post through Bithynia, Thrace, Dacia, Pannonia,  
Italy, and Gaul; and, amidst the joyful acclama-  
tions of the people, reached the port of Boulogne,  
in the very moment when his father was prepar-  
ing to embark for Britain.<sup>o</sup>

The British expedition, and an easy victory over the barbarians of Caledonia, were the last exploits of the reign of Constantius. He ended his life in the imperial palace of York, fifteen months after he had received the title of Augustus, and almost fourteen years and a half after he had been promoted to the rank of Cæsar. His death was immediately succeeded by the elevation of Constantine. The ideas of inheritance and succession are so very familiar, that the generality of mankind consider them as founded, not only in reason, but in nature itself. Our imagination readily transfers the same principles from private property to public dominion; and whenever a virtuous father leaves behind him a son whose merit seems to justify the esteem, or even the hopes, of the people, the joint influence of prejudice and of affection operates with irre-

Death of  
Constan-  
tius, and  
elevation  
of Constan-  
tine,  
A. D. 306,  
July 25.

<sup>n</sup> Zosimus, 1. ii, p. 78, 79. Lactantius de M. P. c. 24. The former tells a very foolish story, that Constantine caused all the post-horses which he had used to be hamstrung. Such a bloody execution, without preventing a pursuit, would have scattered suspicions, and might have stopped his journey.

<sup>o</sup> Anonym. p. 710. Panegyr. Veter. vii, 4. But Zosimus, 1. ii, p. 79; Eusebius de Vit. Constant. 1. i, c. 21; and Lactantius de M. P. c. 24, suppose, with less accuracy, that he found his father on his death-bed.

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sistible weight. The flower of the western armies had followed Constantius into Britain; and the national troops were reinforced by a numerous body of Alemanni, who obeyed the orders of Crocus, one of their hereditary chieftains.<sup>p</sup> The opinion of their own importance, and the assurance that Britain, Gaul, and Spain, would acquiesce in their nomination, were diligently inculcated to the legions by the adherents of Constantine. The soldiers were asked, Whether they could hesitate a moment between the honour of placing at their head the worthy son of their beloved emperor, and the ignominy of tamely expecting the arrival of some obscure stranger, on whom it might please the sovereign of Asia to bestow the armies and provinces of the West? It was insinuated to them, that gratitude and liberality held a distinguished place among the virtues of Constantine; nor did that artful prince shew himself to the troops, till they were prepared to salute him with the names of Augustus and emperor. The throne was the object of his desires; and had he been less actuated by ambition, it was his only means of safety. He was well acquainted with the character and sentiments of Galerius, and sufficiently apprized, that if he wished to live, he must determine to reign. The

<sup>p</sup> Cunctis qui aderant annitentibus, sed præcipue Croco (*aliis Erocoj* Alamannorum rege auxili gratiâ Constantium comitato, imperium capit. Victor Junior, c. 41. This is perhaps the first instance of a barbarian king who assisted the Roman arms with an independent body of his own subjects. The practice grew familiar, and at last became fatal.

decent and even obstinate resistance which he chose to affect,<sup>4</sup> was contrived to justify his usurpation ; nor did he yield to the acclamations of the army, till he had provided the proper materials for the letter, which he immediately dispatched to the emperor of the East. Constantine informed him of the melancholy event of his father's death, modestly asserted his natural claim to the succession, and respectfully lamented, that the affectionate violence of his troops had not permitted him to solicit the imperial purple in the regular and constitutional manner. The first emotions of Galerius were those of surprise, disappointment, and rage ; and as he could seldom restrain his passions, he loudly threatened, that he would commit to the flames both the letter and the messenger. But his resentment insensibly subsided ; and when he recollect ed the doubtful chance of war, when he had weighed the character and strength of his adversary, he consented only the to embrace the honourable accommodation which the prudence of Constantine had left open to him. Without either condemning or ratifying the choice of the British army, Galerius accepted the son of his deceased colleague as the sovereign of the provinces beyond the Alps ; but he gave him only the title of Cæsar, and the fourth rank among the Roman princes, whilst he conferred the vacant place of Augustus on his favourite

<sup>4</sup> His panegyrist Eumenius (vii, 8) ventures to affirm, in the presence of Constantine, that he put spurs to his horse, and tried, but in vain, to escape from the hands of his soldiers.

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Severus. The apparent harmony of the empire was still preserved; and Constantine, who already possessed the substance, expected, without impatience, an opportunity of obtaining the honours, of supreme power.

The brothers and sisters of Constantine.

The children of Constantius by his second marriage were six in number, three of either sex, and whose imperial descent might have solicited a preference over the meaner extraction of the son of Helena. But Constantine was in the thirty-second year of his age, in the full vigour both of mind and body, at the time when the eldest of his brothers could not possibly be more than thirteen years old. His claim of superior merit had been allowed and ratified by the dying emperor.\* In his last moments, Constantius bequeathed to his eldest son the care of the safety as well as greatness of the family; conjuring him to assume both the authority and the sentiments of a father with regard to the children of Theodora. Their liberal education, advantageous marriages, the secure dignity of their lives, and the first honours of the state with which they were invested, attest the fraternal affection of Constantine; and as those princes possessed a mild and grateful disposition,

\* Lactantius de M. P. c. 25. Eumenius (vii, 8) gives a rhetorical turn to the whole transaction.

\* The choice of Constantine, by his dying father, which is warranted by reason, and insinuated by Eumenius, seems to be confirmed by the most unexceptionable authority, the concurring evidence of Lactantius (de M. P. c. 24), and of Libanius (Oration i); of Eusebius (in Vit. Constantini. l. i, c. 18, 21), and of Julian (Oration i).

they submitted without reluctance to the superiority of his genius and fortune.<sup>t</sup>

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II. The ambitious spirit of Galerius was scarcely reconciled to the disappointment of his views upon the Gallic provinces, before the unexpected loss of Italy wounded his pride as well as power in a still more sensible part. The long absence of the emperors had filled Rome with discontent and indignation; and the people gradually discovered, that the preference given to Nicomedia and Milan was not to be ascribed to the particular inclination of Diocletian, but to the permanent form of government which he had instituted. It was in vain that, a few months after his abdication, his successors dedicated, under his name, those magnificent baths, whose ruins still supply the ground as well as the materials for so many churches and convents.<sup>u</sup> The tranquillity of those elegant recesses of ease and luxury was disturbed by the impatient murmurs of the Romans; and a report was insensibly circulated, that the sums expended in erecting

Discontent  
of the Ro-  
mans at the  
apprehen-  
sion of  
taxes.

<sup>t</sup> Of the three sisters of Constantine, Constantia married the emperor Licinius, Anastasia the Cæsar Bassianus, and Eutropia the consul Nepotianus. The three brothers were Dalmatius, Julius Constantius, and Anibalianus, of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

<sup>u</sup> See Gruter Inscript. p. 178. The six princes are all mentioned; Diocletian and Maximian as the senior Augusti and fathers of the emperors. They jointly dedicate, for the use of *their own* Romans, this magnificent edifice. The architects have delineated the ruins of these *thermæ*; and the antiquarians, particularly Donatus and Nardini, have ascertained the ground which they covered. One of the great rooms is now the carthusian church; and even one of the porter's lodges is sufficient to form another church, which belongs to the feuillans.

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those buildings, would soon be required at their hands. About that time the avarice of Galerius, or perhaps the exigencies of the state, had induced him to make a very strict and rigorous inquisition into the property of his subjects, for the purpose of a general taxation, both on their lands and on their persons. A very minute survey appears to have been taken of their real estates; and wherever there was the slightest suspicion of concealment, torture was very freely employed to obtain a sincere declaration of their personal wealth.\* The privileges which had exalted Italy above the rank of the provinces were no longer regarded; and the officers of the revenue already began to number the Roman people, and to settle the proportion of the new taxes. Even when the spirit of freedom had been utterly extinguished, the tamest subjects have sometimes ventured to resist an unprecedented invasion of their property; but on this occasion the injury was aggravated by the insult, and the sense of private interest was quickened by that of national honour. The conquest of Macedonia, as we have already observed, had delivered the Roman people from the weight of personal taxes. Though they had experienced every form of despotism, they had now enjoyed that exemption near five hundred years; nor could they patiently brook the insolence of an Illyrian peasant, who, from his distant residence in Asia, presumed to number Rome

\* See Lactantius de M. P. c. 26, 31.

among the tributary cities of his empire. The rising fury of the people was encouraged by the authority, or at least the connivance, of the senate; and the feeble remains of the praetorian guards, who had reason to apprehend their own dissolution, embraced so honourable a pretence, and declared their readiness to draw their swords in the service of their oppressed country. It was the wish, and it soon became the hope, of every citizen, that after expelling from Italy their foreign tyrants, they should elect a prince who, by the place of his residence, and by his maxims of government, might once more deserve the title of Roman emperor. The name, as well as the situation of Maxentius, determined in his favour the popular enthusiasm.

Maxentius was the son of the emperor Maximian, and he had married the daughter of Galerius. His birth and alliance seemed to offer him the fairest promise of succeeding to the empire; but his vices and incapacity procured him the same exclusion from the dignity of Cæsar, which Constantine had deserved by a dangerous superiority of merit. The policy of Galerius preferred such associates as would never disgrace the choice, nor dispute the commands, of their benefactor. An obscure stranger was therefore raised to the throne of Italy; and the son of the late emperor of the West was left to enjoy the luxury of a private fortune in a villa a few miles distant from the capital. The gloomy passions of his soul, shame, vexation, and rage, were in-

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Maxentius  
declared  
emperor at  
Rome,  
A. D. 306,  
Oct. 28.

CHAP. flamed by envy on the news of Constantine's success ; but the hopes of Maxentius revived with XIV. the public discontent, and he was easily persuaded to unite his personal injury and pretensions with the cause of the Roman people. Two prætorian tribunes and a commissary of provisions undertook the management of the conspiracy ; and as every order of men was actuated by the same spirit, the immediate event was neither doubtful nor difficult. The prefect of the city and a few magistrates, who maintained their fidelity to Severus, were massacred by the guards ; and Maxentius, invested with the imperial ornaments, was acknowledged by the applauding senate and people as the protector of the Roman freedom and dignity. It is uncertain whether Maximian was previously acquainted with the conspiracy ; but as soon as the standard of rebellion was erected at Rome, the old emperor broke from the retirement where the authority of Diocletian had condemned him to pass a life of melancholy solitude, and concealed his returning ambition under the disguise of paternal tenderness. At the request of his son and of the senate, he condescended to re-assume the purple. His ancient dignity, his experience, and his fame in arms, added strength as well as reputation to the party of Maxentius.<sup>7</sup>

Maximian re-assumes the purple.

<sup>7</sup> The sixth panegyric represents the conduct of Maximian in the most favourable light ; and the ambiguous expression of *Aurelius Victor* "retractante diu," may signify, either that he contrived, or that he opposed, the conspiracy. See Zosimus, l. ii, p. 79, and Lactantius de M. P. c. 26.

According to the advice, or rather the orders, of his colleague, the emperor Severus immediately hastened to Rome, in the full confidence, that, by his unexpected celerity, he should easily suppress the tumult of an unwarlike populace, commanded by a licentious youth. But he found, on his arrival, the gates of the city shut against him, the walls filled with men and arms, an experienced general at the head of the rebels, and his own troops without spirit or affection. A large body of Moors deserted to the enemy, allured by the promise of a large donative; and, if it be true that they had been levied by Maximian in his African war, preferring the natural feelings of gratitude to the artificial ties of allegiance. Anulinus, the praetorian prefect, declared himself in favour of Maxentius, and drew after him the most considerable part of the troops accustomed to obey his commands. Rome, according to the expression of an orator, recalled her armies; and the unfortunate Severus, destitute of force and of counsel, retired, or rather fled, with precipitation to Ravenna. Here he might for some time have been safe. The fortifications of Ravenna were able to resist the attempts, and the morasses that surrounded the town were sufficient to prevent the approach, of the Italian army. The sea, which Severus commanded with a powerful fleet, secured him an inexhaustible supply of provisions, and gave a free entrance to the legions, which, on the return of spring, would advance to his assistance from Illyricum and the East. Maxi-

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XIV.Defeat and  
death of  
Severus.

CHAP. mian, who conducted the siege in person, was soon convinced that he might waste his time and his army in the fruitless enterprise, and that he had nothing to hope either from force or famine. With an art more suitable to the character of Diocletian than to his own, he directed his attack, not so much against the walls of Ravenna, as against the mind of Severus. The treachery which he had experienced disposed that unhappy prince to distrust the most sincere of his friends and adherents. The emissaries of Maximian easily persuaded his credulity, that a conspiracy was formed to betray the town; and prevailed upon his fears not to expose himself to the discretion of an irritated conqueror, but to accept the faith of an honourable capitulation. He was at first received with humanity, and treated with respect. Maximian, conducted the captive emperor to Rome, and gave him the most solemn assurances that he had secured his life by the resignation of the purple. But Severus could obtain only an easy death and an imperial funeral. When the sentence was signified to him, the manner of executing it was left to his own choice: he preferred the favourite mode of the ancients, that of opening his veins; and, as soon as he expired, his body was carried to the sepulchre which had been constructed for the family of Gallienus.<sup>2</sup>

A. D. 307,  
February.

<sup>2</sup> The circumstances of this war, and the death of Severus, are very doubtfully and variously told in our ancient fragments (see Tillemoni, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv, part i, p. 555). I have endeavoured to extract from them a consistent and probable narration.

Though the characters of Constantine and Maxentius had very little affinity with each other, their situation and interest were the same ; and prudence seemed to require that they should unite their forces against the common enemy. Notwithstanding the superiority of his age and dignity, the indefatigable Maximian passed the Alps, and courting a personal interview with the sovereign of Gaul, carried with him his daughter Fausta as the pledge of the new alliance. The marriage was celebrated at Arles with every circumstance of magnificence ; and the ancient colleague of Diocletian, who again asserted his claim to the Western empire, conferred on his son-in-law and ally the title of Augustus. By consenting to receive that honour from Maximian, Constantine seemed to embrace the cause of Rome and of the senate ; but his professions were ambiguous, and his assistance slow and ineffectual. He considered with attention the approaching contest between the masters of Italy and the emperor of the East, and was prepared to consult his own safety or ambition in the event of the war.<sup>a</sup>

The importance of the occasion called for the presence and abilities of Galerius. At the head of a powerful army, collected from Illyricum and the East, he entered Italy, resolved to revenge the death of Severus and to chastise the rebel-

<sup>a</sup> The sixth panegyric was pronounced to celebrate the elevation of Constantine ; but the prudent orator avoids the mention either of Galerius or of Maxentius. He introduces only one slight allusion to the actual troubles, and to the majesty of Rome.

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XIV.

Maximian gives his daughter Fausta, and the title of Augustus, to Constantine,  
A. D. 307, March 31.

Galerius invades Italy.

CHAP. lious Romans; or, as he expressed his intentions,  
XIV. in the furious language of a barbarian, to extir-  
..... pate the senate, and to destroy the people by the  
sword. But the skill of Maximian had concerted  
a prudent system of defence.<sup>8</sup> The invader found  
every place hostile, fortified, and inaccessible;  
and though he forced his way as far as Narni,  
within sixty miles of Rome, his dominion in Italy  
was confined to the narrow limits of his camp.  
Sensible of the increasing difficulties of his enter-  
prise, the haughty Galerius made the first ad-  
vances towards a reconciliation; and dispatched  
two of his most considerable officers to tempt the  
Roman princes by the offer of a conference, and  
the declaration of his paternal regard for Max-  
entius, who might obtain much more from his  
liberality than he could hope from the doubtful  
chance of war.<sup>9</sup> The offers of Galerius were  
rejected with firmness; his perfidious friendship  
refused with contempt; and it was not long be-  
fore he discovered, that, unless he provided for  
his safety by a timely retreat, he had some reason  
to apprehend the fate of Severus. The wealth,  
which the Romans defended against his rapacious  
tyranny, they freely contributed for his destruc-  
tion. The name of Maximian, the popular arts  
of his son, the secret distribution of large sums,  
and the promise of still more liberal rewards,

<sup>8</sup> With regard to this negotiation, see the fragments of an anonymous historian, published by Valesius at the end of his edition of Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 711. These fragments have furnished us with several curious, and, as it should seem, authentic anecdotes.

checked the ardour, and corrupted the fidelity of the Illyrian legions; and when Galerius at length gave the signal of the retreat, it was with some difficulty that he could prevail on his veterans not to desert a banner which had so often conducted them to victory and honour. A contemporary writer assigns two other causes for the failure of the expedition; but they are both of such a nature, that a cautious historian will scarcely venture to adopt them. We are told that Galerius, who had formed a very imperfect notion of the greatness of Rome by the cities of the East with which he was acquainted, found his forces inadequate to the siege of that immense capital. But the extent of a city serves only to render it more accessible to the enemy; Rome had long since been accustomed to submit on the approach of a conqueror; nor could the temporary enthusiasm of the people have long contended against the discipline and valour of the legions. We are likewise informed, that the legions themselves were struck with horror and remorse, and that those pious sons of the republic refused to violate the sanctity of their venerable parent.<sup>4</sup> But when we recollect with how much ease, in the more ancient civil wars, the zeal of party, and the habits of military obedience, had converted the native citizens of Rome into her most implacable enemies, we shall be inclined to

<sup>4</sup> Lactantius de M. P. c. 28. The former of these reasons is probably taken from Virgil's Shepherd: " Illam ego huic nostræ similem Melibæe putavi," &c. Lactantius delights in these poetical allusions.

CHAP. distrust this extreme delicacy of strangers and  
 XIV. barbarians, who had never beheld Italy till they  
 entered it in a hostile manner. Had they not  
 been restrained by motives of a more interested  
 nature, they would probably have answered Galerius  
 in the words of Cæsar's veterans: " If our  
 " general wishes to lead us to the banks of the  
 " Tyber, we are prepared to trace out his camp.  
 " Whatsoever walls he has determined to level  
 " with the ground, our hands are ready to work  
 " the engines: nor shall we hesitate, should the  
 " name of the devoted city be Rome itself." These  
 are indeed the expressions of a poet; but  
 of a poet who has been distinguished and even  
 censured for his strict adherence to the truth of  
 history.<sup>a</sup>

*Histretreat.* The legions of Galerius exhibit a very melancholy proof of their disposition, by the ravages which they committed in their retreat. They murdered, they ravished, they plundered, they drove away the flocks and herds of the Italians. They burnt the villages through which they passed, and they endeavoured to destroy the country which it had not been in their power to subdue. During the whole march, Maxentius hung on their rear; but he very prudently declined a general engagement with those brave and desperate

<sup>a</sup> *Castra super Tusci si ponere Tybridis undas; (jubeas)  
 Hesperios audax veniam metator in agros.  
 Tu quoscumque voles in planum offendere mures,  
 His aries actus disperget saxa lacertis;  
 Illa licet penitus tolli quam jusserris urbem  
 Roma sit.*

Lucan. Pharsal. i, 381.

veterans. His father had undertaken a second journey into Gaul, with the hope of persuading Constantine, who had assembled an army on the frontier, to join the pursuit, and to complete the victory. But the actions of Constantine were guided by reason and not by resentment. He persisted in the wise resolution of maintaining a balance of power in the divided empire, and he no longer hated Galerius, when that aspiring prince had ceased to be an object of terror.<sup>2</sup>

The mind of Galerius was the most susceptible of the sterner passions; but it was not, however, incapable of a sincere and lasting friendship. Licinius, whose manners as well as character were not unlike his own, seems to have engaged both his affection and esteem. Their intimacy had commenced in the happier period, perhaps, of their youth and obscurity; it had been cemented by the freedom and dangers of a military life; they had advanced, almost by equal steps, through the successive honours of the service; and as soon as Galerius was invested with the imperial dignity, he seems to have conceived the design of raising his companion to the same rank with himself. During the short period of his prosperity, he considered the rank of Cæsar as unworthy of the age and merit of Licinius, and rather chose to reserve for him the place of Constantius, and the empire of the West. While the emperor

<sup>2</sup> Lactantius de M. P. c. 27. Zozim. l. ii, p. 82. The latter insinuates that Constantine, in his interview with Maximian, had promised to declare war against Galerius.

CHAP.  
XIV.

Elevation  
of Licinius  
to the rank  
of Augus-  
tus,

A. D. 307,  
Nov. 11,

CHAP. was employed in the Italian war, he intrusted his  
 XIV. friend with the defence of the Danube; and immediately after his return from that unfortunate expedition, he invested Licinius with the vacant purple of Severus, resigning to his immediate command the provinces of Illyricum.<sup>f</sup> The news and of of his promotion was no sooner carried into the East, than Maximin, who governed, or rather oppressed, the countries of Egypt and Syria, betrayed his envy and discontent, disdained the inferior name of Cæsar, and, notwithstanding the prayers as well as arguments of Galerius, exacted, almost by violence, the equal title of Augustus.<sup>g</sup> For the first, and indeed for the last, time the Roman world was administered by six emperors. In the West, Constantine and Maxentius affected to reverence their father Maximian. In the East, Licinius and Maximin honoured with more real consideration their benefactor Galerius. The opposition of interest, and the memory of a recent war, divided the empire into two great hostile powers; but their mutual fears produced an apparent tranquillity, and even a feigned recon-

Six empe-  
rors,  
A. D. 308.

<sup>f</sup> M. de Tillenmont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv, part i, p. 559) has proved, that Licinius, without passing through the intermediate rank of Cæsar, was declared Augustus, the 11th of November, A. D. 307, after the return of Galerius from Italy.

<sup>g</sup> Lactantius de M. P. c. 32. When Galerius declared Licinius Augustus with himself, he tried to satisfy his younger associates, by inventing for Constantine and Maximin (not Maxentius, see Beluze, p. 81), the new title of sons of the Augusti. But when Maximin acquainted him that he had been saluted Augustus by the army, Galerius was obliged to acknowledge him, as well as Constantine, as equal associates in the imperial dignity.

ciliation, till the death of the elder princes, of CHAP.  
Maximian, and more particularly of Galerius,  
gave a new direction to the views and passions  
of their surviving associates.

When Maximian had reluctantly abdicated the empire, the venal orators of the times applauded his philosophic moderation. When his ambition excited, or at least encouraged, a civil war, they returned thanks to his generous patriotism, and gently censured that love of ease and retirement which had withdrawn him from the public service.<sup>b</sup> But it was impossible that minds like those of Maximian and his son could long possess in harmony an undivided power. Maxentius considered himself as the legal sovereign of Italy, elected by the Roman senate and people; nor would he endure the control of his father, who arrogantly declared, that by *his* name and abilities the rash youth had been established on the throne. The cause was solemnly pleaded before the prætorian guards; and those troops, who dreaded the severity of the old emperor, espoused the party of Maxentius.<sup>1</sup> The life and freedom of Maximian were however respected, and he retired from Italy into Illyricum, affecting to lament his past conduct, and secretly contriving

Misfor-  
tunes of  
Maximian.

<sup>b</sup> See Panegyr. Vet. vi, 9. *Audi doloris nostri liberam vocem,* &c. The whole passage is imagined with artful flattery, and expressed with an easy flow of eloquence.

<sup>1</sup> Lactantius de M. P. c. 28. Zosim. l. ii, p. 82. A report was spread, that Maxentius was the son of some obscure Syrian, and had been substituted by the wife of Maximian as her own child. See Aurelius Victor, Anonym. Valesian. and Panegyr. Vet. ix, 3, 4.

CHAP. new mischiefs. But Galerius, who was well acquainted with his character, soon obliged him to leave his dominions; and the last refuge of the disappointed Maximian was the court of his son-in-law Constantine.<sup>k</sup> He was received with respect by that artful prince, and with the appearance of filial tenderness by the empress Fausta. That he might remove every suspicion, he resigned the imperial purple a second time,<sup>l</sup> professing himself at length convinced of the vanity of greatness and ambition. Had he persevered in this resolution, he might have ended his life, with less dignity indeed than in his first retirement, yet, however, with comfort and reputation. But the near prospect of a throne brought back to his remembrance the state from whence he was fallen; and he resolved, by a desperate effort, either to reign or to perish. An incursion of the Franks had summoned Constantine, with a part of his army, to the banks of the Rhine; the remainder of the troops were stationed in the southern provinces of Gaul, which lay exposed to the enterprises of the Italian emperor; and a considerable treasure was deposited in the city of Arles. Maximian either craftily invented, or hastily credited, a vain report of the death of

<sup>k</sup> *Ab urbe pulsum, ab Italia fugatum, ab Illyrico repudiatum, tuis provinciis, tuis copiis, tuo palatio, recepisti. Eumen. in Panegyr. Vct. vii, 14.*

<sup>l</sup> Lactantius de M. P. c. 29. Yet after the resignation of the purple, Constantine still continued to Maximian the pomp and honours of the imperial dignity; and on all public occasions, gave the right-hand place to his father-in-law. Panegyr. Vct. vii, 15.

Constantine. Without hesitation he ascended the CHAP.  
throne, seized the treasure, and scattering it with XIV.  
his accustomed profusion among the soldiers, en-  
deavoured to awake in their minds the memory  
of his ancient dignity and exploits. Before he  
could establish his authority, or finish the nego-  
ciation which he appears to have entered into with  
his son Maxentius, the celerity of Constantine  
defeated all his hopes. On the first news of his  
perfidy and ingratitude, that prince returned  
by rapid marches from the Rhine to the Saone,  
embarked on the last mentioned river at Chalons,  
and at Lyons trusting himself to the rapidity of  
the Rhone, arrived at the gates of Arles, with  
a military force which it was impossible for Max-  
imian to resist, and which scarcely permitted him  
to take refuge in the neighbouring city of Mar-  
seilles. The narrow neck of land which joined  
that place to the continent was fortified against  
the besiegers, whilst the sea was open, either for  
the escape of Maximian, or for the succours of  
Maxentius, if the latter should chuse to disguise  
his invasion of Gaul under the honourable pre-  
tence of defending a distressed, or, as he might  
allege, an injured father. Apprehensive of the  
fatal consequences of delay, Constantine gave  
orders for an immediate assault; but the scaling-  
ladders were found too short for the height of  
the walls; and Marseilles might have sustained  
as long a seige as it formerly did against the  
arms of Cæsar, if the garrison, conscious either  
of their fault or of their danger, had not pur-

CHAP. chased their pardon by delivering up the city and  
 XIV. the person of Maximian. A secret but irrevo-  
 His death, cable sentence of death was pronounced against  
 A. D. 310, February. the usurper ; he obtained only the same favour  
 which he had indulged to Severus ; and it was  
 published to the world, that, oppressed by the  
 remorse of his repeated crimes, he strangled him-  
 self with his own hands. After he had lost the  
 assistance, and disdained the moderate counsels,  
 of Diocletian, the second period of his active life  
 was a series of public calamities and personal  
 mortifications, which were terminated, in about  
 three years, by an ignominious death. He de-  
 served his fate ; but we should find more reason  
 to applaud the humanity of Constantine, if he  
 had spared an old man, the benefactor of his fa-  
 ther, and the father of his wife. During the  
 whole of this melancholy transaction, it appears  
 that Fausta sacrificed the sentiments of nature to  
 her conjugal duties.<sup>m</sup>

Death of  
 Galerius,  
 A. D. 311,  
 May.

The last years of Galerius were less shameful  
 and unfortunate ; and though he had filled with  
 more glory the subordinate station of Cæsar than  
 the superior rank of Augustus, he preserved, till  
 the moment of his death, the first place among  
 the princes of the Roman world. He survived

<sup>m</sup> Zosim. l. ii, p. 92. Eumenius in Panegyr. Vet. vii, 16-21. The latter of these has undoubtedly represented the whole affair in the most favourable light for his sovereign. Yet even from this partial narrative we may conclude, that the repeated clemency of Constantine, and the reiterated treasons of Maximian, as they are described by Lactantius (de M. P. c. 29, 30) and copied by the moderns, are destitute of any historical foundation.

his retreat from Italy about four years; and wisely relinquishing his views of universal empire, he devoted the remainder of his life to the enjoyment of pleasure, and to the execution of some works of public utility, among which we may distinguish the discharging into the Danube the superfluous waters of the lake Pelso, and the cutting down the immense forests that encompassed it; an operation worthy of a monarch, since it gave an extensive country to the agriculture of his Pannonian subjects.<sup>n</sup> His death was occasioned by a very painful and lingering disorder. His body, swelled by an intemperate course of life to an unwieldy corpulence, was covered with ulcers, and devoured by innumerable swarms of those insects who have given their name to a most loathsome disease;<sup>o</sup> but as Galerius had offended a very zealous and powerful party among his subjects, his sufferings, instead of exciting their compassion, have been celebrated as the visible effects of divine justice.<sup>p</sup>

<sup>n</sup> Aurelius Victor, c. 40. But that lake was situated on the upper Pannonia, near the borders of Noricum; and the province of Valeria (a name which the wife of Galerius gave to the drained country) undoubtedly lay between the Drave and the Danube (Sextus Rufus, c. 9). I should therefore suspect that Victor has confounded the lake Pelso with the Volecean marshes, or as they are now called, the lake Sabaton. It is placed in the heart of Valeria, and its present extent is not less than twelve Hungarian miles (about seventy English) in length, and two in breadth. See Severini Pannonia, I. i. c. 9.

<sup>o</sup> Lactantius (de M. P. c. 33) and Eusebius (I. viii, c. 16) describe the symptoms and progress of his disorder with singular accuracy and apparent pleasure.

<sup>p</sup> If any (like the late Dr. Jortin, *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, vol. ii, p. 307-356) still delight in recording the wonderful deaths

CHAP. XIV.

His dominion shared between Maximin and Licinius.

He had no sooner expired in his palace of Nicomedia, than the two emperors who were indebted for their purple to his favour began to collect their forces, with the intention either of disputing, or of dividing, the dominions which he had left without a master. They were persuaded, however, to desist from the former design, and to agree in the latter. The provinces of Asia fell to the share of Maximin, and those of Europe augmented the portion of Licinius. The Helle-spont and the Thracian Bosphorus formed their mutual boundary; and the banks of those narrow seas, which flowed in the midst of the Roman world, were covered with soldiers, with arms, and with fortifications. The deaths of Maximian and of Galerius reduced the number of emperors to four. The sense of their true interest soon connected Licinius, and Constantine; a secret alliance was concluded between Maximin and Maxentius; and their unhappy subjects expected with terror the bloody consequences of their inevitable dissensions, which were no longer restrained by the fear or the respect which they had entertained for Galerius.<sup>4</sup>

Administration of Constantine in Gaul,  
A. D. 306-312.

Among so many crimes and misfortunes occasioned by the passions of the Roman princes, there is some pleasure in discovering a single

death of the persecutors, I would recommend to their perusal an admirable passage of Grotius (Hist. l. vii, p. 332), concerning the last illness of Philip II of Spain.

<sup>4</sup> See Eusebius, l. ix, 6, 10. Lactantius de M. P. c. 36. Zosimus is less exact, and evidently confounds Maximian with Maximin.

action which may be ascribed to their virtue. In <sup>CHAP.</sup> XIV. the sixth year of his reign, Constantine visited the city of Autun, and generously remitted the arrears of tribute, reducing at the same time the proportion of their assessment, from twenty-five to eighteen thousand heads, subject to the real and personal capitation.<sup>\*</sup> Yet even this indulgence affords the most unquestionable proof of the public misery. This tax was so extremely oppressive, either in itself, or in the mode of collecting it, that whilst the revenue was increased by extortion, it was diminished by despair; a considerable part of the territory of Autun was left uncultivated; and great numbers of the provincials rather chose to live as exiles and outlaws, than to support the weight of civil society. It is but too probable, that the bountiful emperor relieved, by a partial act of liberality, one among the many evils which he had caused by his general maxims of administration. But even those maxims were less the effect of choice than of necessity; and if we except the death of Maximian, the reign of Constantine in Gaul seems to have been the most innocent and even virtuous period of his life. The provinces were protected by his presence from the inroads of the barbarians, who either dreaded or experienced his active valour. After a signal victory over the Franks and Alemanni, several of their princes

<sup>\*</sup> See the eighth Panegyr. in which Eumenius displays, in the presence of Constantine, the misery and the gratitude of the city of Autun.

CHAP. XIV. were exposed by his order to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre of Treves; and the people seem to have enjoyed the spectacle without discovering, in such a treatment of royal captives, any thing that was repugnant to the laws of nations or of humanity.\*

Tyranny  
of Maxen-  
tius in  
Italy and  
Africa,  
A. D. 306-  
312.

The virtues of Constantine were rendered more illustrious by the vices of Maxentius. Whilst the Gallic provinces enjoyed as much happiness as the condition of the times was capable of receiving, Italy and Africa groaned under the dominion of a tyrant as contemptible as he was odious. The zeal of flattery and faction has indeed too frequently sacrificed the reputation of the vanquished to the glory of their successful rivals; but even those writers who have revealed, with the most freedom and pleasure, the faults of Constantine, unanimously confess, that Maxentius was cruel, rapacious, and profligate.<sup>t</sup> He had the good fortune to suppress a slight rebellion in Africa. The governor and a few adherents had been guilty; the province suffered for their crime. The flourishing cities of Cirtha and Carthage, and the whole extent of that fertile country, were wasted by fire and sword. The abuse of victory was followed by the abuse of law and justice. A formidable army of sycophants

\* Eutropius, x. 3. Panegyr. Veter. vii, 10, 11, 12. A great number of the French youth were likewise exposed to the same cruel and ignominious death.

<sup>t</sup> Julian excludes Maxentius from the banquet of the Cæsars with abhorrence and contempt; and Zosimus (l. ii, p. 85) accuses him of every kind of cruelty and profligacy.

and delators invaded Africa; the rich and the CHAP.  
noble were easily convicted of a connection with XIV.  
the rebels; and those among them who experienced the emperor's clemency were only punished by the confiscation of their estates.<sup>u</sup> So signal a victory was celebrated by a magnificent triumph; and Maxentius exposed to the eyes of the people the spoils and captives of a Roman province. The state of the capital was no less deserving of compassion than that of Africa. The wealth of Rome supplied an inexhaustible fund for his vain and prodigal expences, and the ministers of his revenue were skilled in the arts of rapine. It was under his reign that the method of exacting a *free gift* from the senators was first invented; and as the sum was insensibly increased, the pretences of levying it, a victory, a birth, a marriage, or an imperial consulship, were proportionably multiplied.<sup>x</sup> Maxentius had imbibed the same implacable aversion to the senate, which had characterized most of the former tyrants of Rome; nor was it possible for his ungrateful temper to forgive the generous fidelity which had raised him to the throne, and supported him against all his enemies. The lives of the senators were exposed to his jealous suspicions; the dishonour of their wives and daughters heightened the gratification of his sensual pas-

<sup>u</sup> Zosimus, I. ii, p. 83-85. Aurelius Victor.

<sup>x</sup> The passage of Aurelius Victor should be read in the following manner: *Primus instituto pessimo, munera specie, patres oratores pecunium confere prodigenti sibi cogeret.*

CHAP. XIV. sions.<sup>3</sup> It may be presumed that an imperial lover was seldom reduced to sigh in vain; but whenever persuasion proved ineffectual, he had recourse to violence; and there remains *one* memorable example of a noble matron, who preserved her chastity by a voluntary death. The soldiers were the only order of men whom he appeared to respect, or studied to please. He filled Rome and Italy with armed troops, connived at their tumults, suffered them with impunity to plunder, and even to massacre, the defenceless people; <sup>4</sup> and indulging them in the same licentiousness which their emperor enjoyed, Maxentius often bestowed on his military favourites the splendid villa, or the beautiful wife, of a senator. A prince of such a character, alike incapable of governing either in peace or in war, might purchase the support, but he could never obtain the esteem, of the army. Yet his pride was equal to his other vices. Whilst he passed his indolent life, either within the walls of his palace, or in the neighbouring gardens of Sallust, he was repeatedly heard to declare, that *he alone* was emperor, and that the other princes were no more than his lieutenants, on whom he

<sup>3</sup> Panegyr. Vet. ix, 3. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. viii, 14, et in Vit. Constant. i, 33, 34. Rufinus, c. 17. The virtuous matron, who stabbed herself to escape the violence of Maxentius, was a christian, wife to the prefect of the city, and her name was Sophronia. It still remains a question among the casuists, whether, on such occasions, suicide is justifiable?

<sup>4</sup> Praetorianis caudem vulgi quondam annueret, is the vague expression of Aurelius Victor. See more particular, though somewhat different, accounts of a tumult and massacre which happened at Rome, in Eusebius (l. viii, c. 14) and in Zosimus (l. ii, p. 84).

had devolved the defence of the frontier provinces, that he might enjoy without interruption the elegant luxury of the capital. Rome, which had so long regretted the absence, lamented, during the six years of his reign, the presence, of her sovereign.<sup>a</sup>

Though Constantine might view the conduct of Maxentius with abhorrence, and the situation of the Romans with compassion, we have no reason to presume that he would have taken up arms to punish the one, or to relieve the other. But the tyrant of Italy rashly ventured to provoke a formidable enemy, whose ambition had been hitherto restrained by the considerations of prudence, rather than by principles of justice.<sup>b</sup> After the death of Maximian, his titles, according to the established custom, had been erased, and his statues thrown down, with ignominy. His son, who had persecuted and deserted him when alive, affected to display the most pious regard to his memory, and gave orders that a similar treatment should be immediately inflicted on all the statues that had been erected in Italy and Africa to the honour of Constantine. That wise prince, who sincerely wished to decline a

<sup>a</sup> See in the Panegyrics (ix, 14), a lively description of the indolence and vain pride of Maxentius. In another place the orator observes, that the riches which Rome had accumulated in a period of 1060 years were lavished by the tyrant on his mercenary bands; *redemptis ad civile latrocinium manibus ingesserat*.

<sup>b</sup> After the victory of Constantine, it was universally allowed, that the motive of delivering the republic from a detested tyrant would, at any time, have justified his expedition into Italy. Euseb. in *Vit. Constantini*. l. i. c. 26. *Panegyr. Vet. ix*, 2.

CHAP. war, with the difficulty and importance of which  
XIV. he was sufficiently acquainted, at first dissembled  
the insult, and sought for redress by the milder  
expedients of negociation, till he was convinced,  
that the hostile and ambitious designs of the  
Italian emperor made it necessary for him to arm  
in his own defence. Maxentius, who openly  
avowed his pretensions to the whole monarchy of  
the West, had already prepared a very consider-  
able force to invade the Gallic provinces on the  
side of Rhætia; and though he could not expect  
any assistance from Licinius, he was flattered with  
the hope that the legions of Illyricum, allured  
by his presents and promises, would desert the  
standard of that prince, and unanimously declare  
themselves his soldiers and subjects.<sup>c</sup> Constantine  
no longer hesitated. He had deliberated  
with caution; he acted with vigour. He gave a  
private audience to the ambassadors, who, in the  
name of the senate and people, conjured him to  
deliver Rome from a detested tyrant; and, with-  
out regarding the timid remonstrances of his  
council, he resolved to prevent the enemy, and  
to carry the war into the heart of Italy.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>c</sup> Zosimus, l. ii, p. 84, 85. Nazarius in Panegyr. x, 7-13.

<sup>d</sup> See Panegyr. Vet. ix, 2. Omnibus fere tuis comitibus et du-  
cibus non solum tacite mussantibus, sed etiam aperte timentibus;  
contra consilia hominum, contra Haruspicum monita, ipse per temet  
liberandæ urbis tempus venisse sentires. The embassy of the Romans  
is mentioned only by Zonaras (l. xiii) and by Cedrenus (in Compedit.  
Hist. p. 270); but those modern Greeks had the opportunity of con-  
sulting many writers which have since been lost, among which we  
may reckon the life of Constantine by Praxagoras. Photius (p. 63)  
has made a short extract from that historical work.

The enterprise was as full of danger as of CHAP.  
glory; and the unsuccessful event of two former XIV.  
invasions was sufficient to inspire the most serious Prepara-  
apprehensions. The veteran troops who revered-  
tions.  
the name of Maximian, had embraced in both  
those wars the party of his son, and were now  
restrained by a sense of honour, as well as of  
interest, from entertaining an idea of a second  
desertion. Maxentius, who considered the præ-  
torian guards as the firmest defence of his throne,  
had increased them to their ancient establish-  
ment; and they composed, including the rest of  
the Italians who were inlisted into his service,  
a formidable body of fourscore thousand men.  
Forty thousand Moors and Carthaginians had  
been raised since the reduction of Africa. Even  
Sicily furnished its proportion of troops; and  
the armies of Maxentius amounted to one hun-  
dred and seventy thousand foot, and eighteen  
thousand horse. The wealth of Italy supplied  
the expences of the war; and the adjacent pro-  
vinces were exhausted, to form immense maga-  
zines of corn and every other kind of provisions.  
The whole force of Constantine consisted of  
ninety thousand foot and eight thousand horse;<sup>e</sup>  
and as the defence of the Rhine required an ex-  
traordinary attention during the absence of the  
emperor, it was not in his power to employ

<sup>e</sup> Zosimus (l. ii, p. 86) has given us this curious account of the  
forces on both sides. He makes no mention of any naval armaments,  
though we are assured (Panegyr. Vet. ix, 25) that the war was car-  
ried on by sea as well as by land; and that the fleet of Constantine  
took possession of Sardinia, Corsica, and the ports of Italy.

CHAP. above half his troops in the Italian expedition,  
XIV. unless he sacrificed the public safety to his pri-  
vate quarrel.<sup>1</sup> At the head of about forty  
thousand soldiers, he marched to encounter an  
enemy whose numbers were at least four times  
superior to his own. But the armies of Rome,  
placed at a secure distance from danger, were  
enervated by indulgence and luxury. Habituated  
to the baths and theatres of Rome, they took  
the field with reluctance, and were chiefly com-  
posed of veterans who had almost forgotten, or  
of new levies who had never acquired, the use  
of arms and the practice of war. The hardy le-  
gions of Gaul had long defended the frontiers of  
the empire against the barbarians of the north;  
and in the performance of that laborious service,  
their valour was exercised, and their discipline  
confirmed. There appeared the same difference  
between the leaders as between the armies.  
Caprice or flattery had tempted Maxentius with  
the hopes of conquest; but these aspiring hopes  
soon gave way to the habits of pleasure and the  
consciousness of his inexperience. The intrepid  
mind of Constantine had been trained from his  
earliest youth to war, to action, and to military  
command.

Constan-  
tine passes  
the Alps.

When Hannibal marched from Gaul into Italy,  
he was obliged, first to discover, and then to

<sup>1</sup> Panegyr. Vet. ix, 3. It is not surprising that the orator should diminish the numbers with which his sovereign achieved the conquest of Italy; but it appears somewhat singular that he should esteem the tyrant's army at no more than 100,000 men.

open, a way over mountains, and through savage nations, that had never yielded a passage to a regular army.<sup>5</sup> The Alps were then guarded by nature; they are now fortified by art. Citadels constructed with no less skill than labour and expence command every avenue into the plain, and on that side render Italy almost inaccessible to the enemies of the king of Sardinia.<sup>6</sup> But in the course of the intermediate period, the generals who have attempted the passage have seldom experienced any difficulty or resistance. In the age of Constantine, the peasants of the mountains were civilized and obedient subjects; the country was plentifully stocked with provisions; and the stupendous highways, which the Romans had carried over the Alps, opened several communications between Gaul and Italy.<sup>1</sup> Constantine preferred the road of the Cottian Alps, or, as it is now called, of mount Cenis, and led his troops with such active diligence that he descended into the plain

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<sup>5</sup> The three principal passages of the Alps between Gaul and Italy are those of mount St. Bernard, mount Cenis, and mount Genevre. Tradition, and a resemblance of names (*Alpes Penninæ*) had assigned the first of these for the march of Hannibal (see Simler de Alpibus). The Chevalier de Folard (Polybe, tom. iv) and M. d'Anville have led him over mount Genevre. But notwithstanding the authority of an experienced officer and a learned geographer, the pretensions of mount Cenis are supported in a specious, not to say a convincing, manner by M. Grosley. *Observations sur l'Italie*, tom. i, p. 40, &c.

<sup>6</sup> La Brunette near Suse, Demont, Exiles, Fenestrelles, Coni, &c.

<sup>1</sup> See Ammian. Marcellin. xv, 10. His description of the roads over the Alps is clear, lively, and accurate.

CHAP. of Piedmont before the court of Maxentius had  
XIV. received any certain intelligence of his departure  
from the banks of the Rhine. The city of  
Susa, however, which is situated at the foot of  
mount Cenis, was surrounded with walls, and  
provided with a garrison sufficiently numerous  
to check the progress of an invader; but the  
impatience of Constantine's troops disdained the  
tedious forms of a siege. The same day that  
they appeared before Susa, they applied fire to  
the gates, and ladders to the walls; and mount-  
ing to the assault amidst a shower of stones and  
arrows, they entered the place sword in hand,  
and cut in pieces the greatest part of the gar-  
rison. The flames were extinguished by the care  
of Constantine, and the remains of Susa pre-  
served from total destruction. About forty miles  
from thence, a more severe contest awaited  
him. A numerous army of Italians was assem-  
bled under the lieutenants of Maxentius in the  
plains of Turin. Its principal strength consisted  
in a species of heavy cavalry, which the Romans,  
since the decline of their discipline, had borrow-  
ed from the nations of the East. The horses,  
as well as the men, were clothed in complete  
armour, the joints of which were artfully adapted  
to the motions of their bodies. The aspect of  
this cavalry was formidable, their weight almost  
irresistible; and as, on this occasion, their gene-  
rals had drawn them up in a compact column or  
wedge, with a sharp point, and with spreading

Battle of  
Turin.

flanks, they flattered themselves that they should easily break and trample down the army of Constantine. They might, perhaps, have succeeded in their design, had not their experienced adversary embraced the same method of defence, which in similar circumstances had been practised by Aurelian. The skilful evolutions of Constantine divided and baffled this massy column of cavalry. The troops of Maxentius fled in confusion towards Turin; and as the gates of the city were shut against them, very few escaped the sword of the victorious pursuers. By this important service, Turin deserved to experience the clemency and even favour of the conqueror. He made his entry into the imperial palace of Milan; and almost all the cities of Italy between the Alps and the Po not only acknowledged the power, but embraced with zeal the party, of Constantine.<sup>k</sup>

From Milan to Rome, the Æmilian and Flaminian highways offered an easy march of about four hundred miles; but though Constantine was impatient to encounter the tyrant, he prudently directed his operations against another army of Italians, who, by their strength and position, might either oppose his progress, or, in case of a misfortune, might intercept his retreat. Ruricus Pompeianus, a general distinguished by his valour and ability, had under his

and  
battle of  
Verona.

<sup>k</sup> Zosimus as well as Eusebius hasten from the passage of the Alps to the decisive action near Rome. We must apply to the two Panegyrics for the intermediate actions of Constantine.

CHAP. command the city of Verona, and all the troops  
XIV. that were stationed in the province of Venetia.

As soon as he was informed that Constantine was advancing towards him, he detached a large body of cavalry, which was defeated in an engagement near Brescia, and pursued by the Gallic legions as far as the gates of Verona. The necessity, the importance, and the difficulties, of the siege of Verona, immediately presented themselves to the sagacious mind of Constantine.<sup>1</sup> The city was accessible only by a narrow peninsula towards the west, as the other three sides were surrounded by the Adige, a rapid river which covered the province of Venetia, from whence the besieged derived an inexhaustible supply of men and provisions. It was not without great difficulty, and after several fruitless attempts, that Constantine found means to pass the river at some distance above the city, and in a place where the torrent was less violent. He then encompassed Verona with strong lines, pushed his attacks with prudent vigour, and repelled a desperate sally of Pompeianus. That intrepid general, when he had used every means of defence that the strength of the place or that of the garrison could afford, secretly escaped from Ve-

<sup>1</sup> The Marquis Maffei has examined the siege and battle of Verona, with that degree of attention and accuracy which was due to a memorable action that happened in his native country. The fortifications of that city, constructed by Gallienus, were less extensive than the modern walls, and the amphitheatre was not included within their circumference. See Verona Illustrata, part i, p. 142, 150.

rona, anxious not for his own but for the public safety. With indefatigable diligence he soon collected an army sufficient either to meet Constantine in the field, or to attack him if he obstinately remained within his lines. The emperor, attentive to the motions, and informed of the approach, of so formidable an enemy, left a part of his legions to continue the operations of the siege, whilst, at the head of those troops on whose valour and fidelity he more particularly depended, he advanced in person to engage the general of Maxentius. The army of Gaul was drawn up in two lines, according to the usual practice of war; but their experienced leader perceiving that the numbers of the Italians far exceeded his own, suddenly changed his disposition, and reducing the second, extended the front of his first, line to a just proportion with that of the enemy. Such evolutions, which only veteran troops can execute without confusion in a moment of danger, commonly prove decisive: but as this engagement began towards the close of the day, and was contested with great obstinacy during the whole night, there was less room for the conduct of the generals than for the courage of the soldiers. The return of light displayed the victory of Constantine, and a field of carnage covered with many thousands of the vanquished Italians. Their general, Pompeianus, was found among the slain; Verona immediately surrendered at discretion, and the garrison was

CHAP. made prisoners of war.<sup>m</sup> When the officers of  
 XIV. the victorious army congratulated their master  
 ===== on this important success, they ventured to add  
 some respectful complaints, of such a nature,  
 however, as the most jealous monarchs will listen to without displeasure. They represented  
 to Constantine, that, not contented with performing all the duties of a commander, he had  
 exposed his own person with an excess of valour  
 which almost degenerated into rashness; and they conjured him for the future to pay more  
 regard to the preservation of a life, in which the  
 safety of Rome and of the empire was involved.<sup>n</sup>

Indolence  
and fears of  
Maxentius.

While Constantine signalized his conduct and  
 valour in the field, the sovereign of Italy appeared  
 insensible of the calamities and danger of a  
 civil war which raged in the heart of his domi-  
 nions. Pleasure was still the only business of  
 Maxentius. Concealing, or at least attempting  
 to conceal, from the public knowledge the mis-  
 fortunes of his arms,<sup>o</sup> he indulged himself in  
 a vain confidence, which deferred the remedies  
 of the approaching evil, without deferring the  
 evil itself.<sup>p</sup> The rapid progress of Constan-

<sup>m</sup> They wanted chains for so great a multitude of captives; and the whole council was at a loss; but the sagacious conqueror imagined the happy expedient of converting into fetters the swords of the vanquished. Panegyr. Vet. ix, 11.

<sup>n</sup> Panegyr. Vet. ix, 10.

<sup>o</sup> Literas calamitatum, stuarum indices supprimebat. Panegyr. Vet. ix, 15.

<sup>p</sup> Remedia malorum potius quam mala differebat, is the fine cen-  
 sure which Tacitus passes on the supine indolence of Vitellius.

tine<sup>4</sup> was scarcely sufficient to awaken him from this fatal security : he flattered himself, that his well-known liberality, and the majesty of the Roman name, which had already delivered him from two invasions, would dissipate with the same facility the rebellious army of Gaul. The officers of experience and ability, who had served under the banners of Maximian, were at length compelled to inform his effeminate son of the imminent danger to which he was reduced ; and, with a freedom that at once surprised and convinced him, to urge the necessity of preventing his ruin, by a vigorous exertion of his remaining power. The resources of Maxentius, both of men and money, were still considerable. The prætorian guards felt how strongly their own interest and safety were connected with his cause; and a third army was soon collected, more numerous than those which had been lost in the battles of Turin and Verona. It was far from the intention of the emperor to lead his troops in person. A stranger to the exercises of war, he trembled at the apprehension of so dangerous a contest ; and as fear is commonly superstitious, he listened with melancholy attention to the rumours of omens and presages which seemed to menace his life and empire. Shame at length supplied the place of courage, and forced him to take the field. He was unable to sustain the

<sup>4</sup> The marquis Maffei has made it extremely probable that Constantine was still at Verona, the 1st of September A. D. 312, and that the memorable era of the indictions was dated from his conquest of the Cisalpine Gaul.

CHAP. contempt of the Roman people. The circus  
 XIV. resounded with their indignant clamours, and  
 ..... they tumultuously besieged the gates of the pa-  
 lace, reproaching the pusillanimity of their in-  
 dolent sovereign, and celebrating the heroic spirit  
 of Constantine.<sup>2</sup> Before Maxentiūs left Rome,  
 he consulted the Sibylline books. The guardians  
 of these ancient oracles were as well versed in the  
 arts of this world, as they were ignorant of the  
 secrets of fate; and they returned him a very pru-  
 dent answer, which might adapt itself to the  
 event, and secure their reputation whatever  
 should be the chance of arms.<sup>3</sup>

Victory of  
 Constan-  
 tine near  
 Rome,  
 A. D. 312,  
 29th Oct.

The celerity of Constantine's march has been  
 compared to the rapid conquest of Italy by the  
 first of the Cæsars; nor is the flattering parallel  
 repugnant to the truth of history, since no more  
 than fifty-eight days elapsed between the surren-  
 der of Verona and the final decision of the war.  
 Constantine had always apprehended that the  
 tyrant would consult the dictates of fear, and  
 perhaps of prudence; and that, instead of risk-  
 ing his last hopes in a general engagement, he  
 would shut himself up within the walls of Rome.  
 His ample magazine secured him against the  
 danger of famine; and as the situation of Con-  
 stantine admitted not of delay, he might have  
 been reduced to the sad necessity of destroying  
 with fire and sword the imperial city, the noblest  
 reward of his victory, and the deliverance of

<sup>2</sup> See Panegyr. Vet. xi, 16. Lanctantius de M. P. c. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Illo die hostem Romanorum esse peritum. The vanquished  
 prince became of course the enemy of Rome.

which had been the motive, or rather indeed the pretence, of the civil war.<sup>t</sup> It was with equal surprise and pleasure, that on his arrival at a place called *Saxa Rubra*, about nine miles from Rome,<sup>u</sup> he discovered the army of Maxentius prepared to give him battle.<sup>x</sup> Their long front filled a very spacious plain, and their deep array reached to the banks of the Tyber, which covered their rear, and forbade their retreat. We are informed, and we may believe, that Constantine disposed his troops with consummate skill, and that he chose for himself the post of honour and danger. Distinguished by the splendour of his arms, he charged in person the cavalry of his rival; and his irresistible attack determined the fortune of the day. The cavalry of Maxentius was principally composed either of unwieldy cuirassiers, or of light Moors and Numidians. They yielded to the vigour of the Gallic horse, which possessed more activity than the one, more firmness than the other. The defeat of the two wings left the infantry without any protection on

<sup>t</sup> See *Panegyr. Vet.* ix, 16, x, 27. The former of these orators magnifies the hordes of corn which Maxentius had collected from Africa and the islands. And yet, if there is any truth in the scarcity mentioned by Eusebius (*in Vit. Constantini* 1, i, c. 36), the imperial granaries must have been open only to the soldiers.

<sup>u</sup> Maxentius . . . tandem urbe in *Saxa Rubra*, millia ferme novem aegerrime progressus. *Aurelius Victor.* See *Cellarius Geograph. Antiq.* tom. i, p. 463. *Saxa Rubra* was in the neighbourhood of the Cremera, a trifling rivulet, illustrated by the valour and glorious death of the three hundred *Fabii*.

<sup>x</sup> The post which Maxentius had taken, with the Tyber in his rear, is very clearly described by the two *Panegyrista*s, ix, 16, x, 28.

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its flanks, and the undisciplined Italians fled without reluctance from the standard of a tyrant whom they had always hated, and whom they no longer feared. The praetorians, conscious that their offences were beyond the reach of mercy, were animated by revenge and despair. Notwithstanding their repeated efforts, these brave veterans were unable to recover the victory: they obtained, however, an honourable death; and it was observed that their bodies covered the same ground which had been occupied by their ranks.<sup>1</sup> The confusion then became general; and the dismayed troops of Maxentius, pursued by an implacable enemy, rushed by thousands into the deep and rapid stream of the Tyber. The emperor himself attempted to escape back into the city over the Milvian bridge; but the crowds which pressed together through that narrow passage, forced him into the river, where he was immediately drowned by the weight of his armour.<sup>2</sup> His body, which had sunk very deep into the mud, was found with some

<sup>1</sup> Exceptis latrociniis illius primis auctoribus, qui desperatā venia locum quem pugnae sumpserant texere corporibus. Panegyr. Vetus, 17.

<sup>2</sup> A very idle rumour soon prevailed, that Maxentius, who had not taken any precaution for his own retreat, had contrived a very artful snare to destroy the army of the pursuers; but that the wooden bridge which was to have been loosened on the approach of Constantine, unluckily broke down under the weight of the flying Italians. M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom iv, part i, p. 576) very seriously examines whether, in contradiction to common sense, the testimony of Usebius and Zosimus ought to prevail over the silence of Lactantius, Nazarius, and the anonymous, but contemporary, orator who composed the ninth panegyric.

difficulty the next day. The sight of his head, when it was exposed to the eyes of the people, convinced them of their deliverance, and admonished them to receive, with acclamations of loyalty and gratitude, the fortunate Constantine, who thus achieved by his valour and ability the most splendid enterprise of his life.<sup>a</sup>

In the use of victory, Constantine neither deserved the praise of clemency, nor incurred the censure of immoderate rigour.<sup>b</sup> He inflicted the same treatment to which a defeat would have exposed his own person and family; put to death the two sons of the tyrant, and carefully extirpated his whole race. The most distinguished adherents of Maxentius must have expected to share his fate, as they had shared his prosperity and his crimes; but when the Roman people loudly demanded a greater number of victims, the conqueror resisted, with firmness and humanity, those servile clamours, which were dictated by flattery as well as by resentment. Informers were punished and discouraged; the innocent, who had suffered under the late tyranny, were recalled from exile, and restored to their estates.

<sup>a</sup> Zosimus, l. ii, p. 86-88, and the two Panegyrics, the former of which was pronounced a few months afterwards, afford the clearest notion of this great battle. Lactantius, Eusebius, and even the epitomes, supply several useful hints.

<sup>b</sup> Zosimus, the enemy of Constantine, allows (l. ii, p. 88), that only a few of the friends of Maxentius were put to death; but we may remark the expressive passage of Nazarius (Panegyr. Vet. x, 6), *Omnibus qui labefactari statum ejus poterant cum stirpe deletis.* The other orator (Panegyr. Vet. ix, 20, 21) contents himself with observing, that Constantine, when he entered Rome, did not imitate the cruel massacres of Cinna, of Marius, or of Sylla.

CHAP. A general act of oblivion quieted the minds and  
XIV. settled the property of the people, both in Italy  
and in Africa.<sup>c</sup> The first time that Constantine  
honoured the senate with his presence, he recapitulated his own services and exploits in a mod-  
est oration, assured that illustrious order of his  
sincere regard, and promised to re-establish its  
ancient dignity and privileges. The grateful  
senate repaid these unmeaning professions by the  
empty titles of honour, which it was yet in their  
power to bestow<sup>d</sup>; and without presuming to ratify  
the authority of Constantine, they passed a decree  
to assign him the first rank among the three  
*Augusti*, who governed the Roman world.<sup>d</sup> Games and festivals were instituted to preserve  
the fame of his victory; and several edifices, raised  
at the expence of Maxentius, were dedicated to  
the honour of his successful rival. The triumphal  
arch of Constantine still remains a melancholy  
proof of the decline of the arts, and a singular  
testimony of the meanest vanity. As it was not  
possible to find in the capital of the empire a  
sculptor who was capable of adorning that pub-  
lic monument, the arch of Trajan, without any  
respect either for his memory or for the rules of  
propriety, was stripped of its most elegant figures.  
The difference of times and persons, of actions  
and characters, was totally disregarded. The

<sup>c</sup> See the two Panegyrics, and the laws of this and the ensuing  
year, in the Theodosian Code.

<sup>d</sup> Panegyr. Vet. ix, 20. Lactantius de M. P. c. 44. Maximin,  
who was confessedly the eldest Caesar, claimed, with some shew of  
reason, the first rank among the *Augusti*.

Parthian captives appear prostrate at the feet of a prince who never carried his arms beyond the Euphrates; and curious antiquarians can still discover the head of Trajan on the trophies of Constantine. The new ornaments which it was necessary to introduce between the vacancies of ancient sculpture are executed in the rudest and most unskilful manner.<sup>e</sup>

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The final abolition of the prætorian guards was a measure of prudence as well as of revenge. Those haughty troops, whose numbers and privileges had been restored, and even augmented, by Maxentius, were for ever suppressed by Constantine. Their fortified camp was destroyed; and the few prætorians who had escaped the fury of the sword, were dispersed among the legions, and banished to the frontiers of the empire, where they might be serviceable without again becoming dangerous.<sup>f</sup> By suppressing the troops which were usually stationed in Rome, Constantine gave the fatal blow to the dignity of the senate and people, and the disarmed capital was exposed without protection to the insults or neglect of its distant master. We may observe, that in this last effort to preserve their expiring

conduct at  
Rome.

<sup>e</sup> Adhuc cuncta opera quæ magnifice construxerat, urbis fanum, atque basilicam, Flavii meritis patres sacravere. *Aurelius Victor.* With regard to the theft of Trajan's trophies, consult *Flaminius Vacca, apud Montfaucon, Diarium Italicum, p. 250*, and *l'Antiquité Expliquée* of the latter, tom. iv, p. 171.

<sup>f</sup> *Prætoriæ legiones ac subsidia factionibus aptiora quam urbi Romæ, sublata penitus; simul arma atque usus indumenti militaris.* *Aurelius Victor.* *Zosimus (l. ii, p. 89)* mentions this fact as an historian, and it is very pompously celebrated in the ninth *Panegyric*.

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freedom, the Romans, from the apprehension of a tribute, had raised Maxentius to the throne. He exacted that tribute from the senate under the name of a free gift. They implored the assistance of Constantine. He vanquished the tyrant, and converted the free gift into a perpetual tax. The senators, according to the declaration which was required of their property, were divided into several classes. The most opulent paid annually eight pounds of gold, the next class paid four, the last two, and those whose poverty might have claimed an exemption, were assessed, however, at seven pieces of gold. Besides the regular members of the senate, their sons, their descendants, and even their relations, enjoyed the vain privileges, and supported the heavy burdens, of the senatorial order; nor will it any longer excite our surprise, that Constantine should be attentive to increase the number of persons who were included under so useful a description.<sup>6</sup> After the death of Maxentius, the victorious emperor passed no more than two or three months in Rome, which he visited twice during the remainder of his life, to celebrate the solemn festivals of the tenth and of the twentieth year of his age. Constantine was

<sup>6</sup> Ex omnibus provinciis optimates viros Curiae tue pignoraveris; ut senatoris dignitas . . . ex totius orbis flore consistaret. Nazarius in Panegyr. Vet. x, 35. The word *pignoraveris* might almost seem maliciously chosen. Concerning the senatorial tax, see Zosimus, I. ii, p. 115, the second title of the sixth book of the Theodosian Code, with Godefroy's Commentary, and Mémoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxviii, p. 726.

almost perpetually in motion to exercise the legions, or to inspect the state of the provinces. CHAP. XIV. Treves, Milan, Aquileia, Sermium, Naissus, and Thessalonica, were the occasional places of his residence till he founded a NEW ROME on the confines of Europe and Asia.<sup>b</sup>

Before Constantine marched into Italy, he had secured the friendship, or at least the neutrality, of Licinius, the Illyrian emperor. His alliance with Licinius, A. D. 313, March, He had promised his sister Constantia in marriage to that prince; but the celebration of the nuptials was deferred till after the conclusion of the war; and the interview of the two emperors at Milan, which was appointed for that purpose, appeared to cement the union of their families and interests.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of the public festivity they were suddenly obliged to take leave of each other. An inroad of the Franks summoned Constantine to the Rhine, and the hostile approach of the sovereign of Asia demanded the immediate presence of Licinius. Maximin had been the secret ally of Maxentius; and without being discouraged by his fate, he resolved to try the fortune of a civil war. War between Maximin and Licinius, A. D. 313. He moved out of Syria towards the frontiers of Bithynia in

<sup>b</sup> From the Theodosian Code, we may now begin to trace the motions of the emperors; but the dates both of time and place have frequently been altered by the carelessness of transcribers.

<sup>1</sup> Zosimus (l. ii, p. 89) observes, that before the war the sister of Constantine had been betrothed to Licinius. According to the younger Victor, Diocletian was invited to the nuptials; but having ventured to plead his age and infirmities, he received a second letter filled with reproaches for his supposed partiality to the cause of Maxentius and Maximin.

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the depth of winter. The season was severe and tempestuous; great numbers of men as well as horses perished in the snow; and as the roads were broken up by incessant rains, he was obliged to leave behind him a considerable part of the heavy baggage, which was unable to follow the rapidity of his forced marches. By this extraordinary effort of diligence, he arrived, with a harrassed but formidable army, on the banks of the Thracian Bosphorus, before the lieutenants of Licinius were apprised of his hostile intentions. Byzantium surrendered to the power of Maximin, after a siege of eleven days. He was detained some days under the walls of Heraclea; and he had no sooner taken possession of that city, than he was alarmed by the intelligence, that Licinius had pitched his camp at the distance of only eighteen miles. After a fruitless negotiation, in which the two princes attempted to seduce the fidelity of each other's adherents, they had recourse to arms. The emperor of the East commanded a disciplined and veteran army of above seventy thousand men; and Licinius, who had collected about thirty thousand Illyrians, was at first oppressed by the superiority of numbers. His military skill, and the firmness of his troops, restored the day, and obtained a decisive victory. The incredible speed which Maximin exerted in his flight is much more celebrated than his prowess in the battle. Twenty-four hours afterwards he was seen pale, trembling, and without his imperial ornaments, at Nico-media, one hundred and sixty miles from the

The defeat,  
April 30,

place of his defeat. The wealth of Asia was yet unexhausted ; and though the flower of his veterans had fallen in the late action, he had still power, if he could obtain time, to draw very numerous levies from Syria and Egypt. But he survived his misfortune only three or four months. His death, which happened at Tarsus, was variously ascribed to despair, to poison, and to the divine justice. As Maximin was alike destitute of abilities and of virtue, he was lamented neither by the people nor by the soldiers. The provinces of the East, delivered from the terrors of civil war, cheerfully acknowledged the authority of Licinius.<sup>k</sup>

The vanquished emperor left behind him two children, a boy of about eight, and a girl of about seven, years old. Their inoffensive age might have excited compassion ; but the compassion of Licinius was a very feeble resource, nor did it restrain him from *extinguishing* the name and memory of his adversary. The death of Severianus will admit of less excuse, as it was dictated neither by revenge nor by policy. The conqueror had never received any injury from the father of that unhappy youth, and the short and obscure reign of Severus in a distant part of the empire was already forgotten. But the execution of Candidianus was an act of the blackest cruelty and ingratitude. He was the natural son

<sup>k</sup> Zosimus mentions the defeat and death of Maximin as ordinary events ; but Lactantius expatiates on them (de M. P. c. 45-50), ascribing them to the miraculous interposition of Heaven. Licinius at that time was one of the protectors of the church.

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of Galerius, the friend and benefactor of Licinius. The prudent father had judged him too young to sustain the weight of a diadem; but he hoped that under the protection of princes, who were indebted to his favour for the imperial purple, Candidianus might pass a secure and honourable life. He was now advancing towards the twentieth year of his age; and the royalty of his birth, though unsupported either by merit or ambition, was sufficient to exasperate the jealous mind of Licinius.<sup>1</sup> To these innocent and illustrious victims of his tyranny, we must add the wife and daughter of the emperor Diocletian. When that prince conferred on Galerius the title of Caesar, he had given him in marriage his daughter Valeria, whose melancholy adventures might furnish a very singular subject for tragedy.

Unfortunate fate  
of the em-  
press Valeria  
and her  
mother.

She had fulfilled and even surpassed the duties of a wife. As she had not any children herself, she condescended to adopt the illegitimate son of her husband; and invariably displayed towards the unhappy Candidianus the tenderness and anxiety of a real mother. After the death of Galerius, her ample possessions provoked the avarice, and her personal attractions excited the desires, of his successor Maximin.<sup>m</sup> He had a wife still alive,

<sup>1</sup> Lactantius de M. P. c. 50. Aurelius Victor touches on the different conduct of Licinius, and of Constantine, in the use of victory.

<sup>m</sup> The sensual appetites of Maximin were gratified at the expence of his subjects. His eunuchs, who forced away wives and virgins, examined their naked charms with anxious curiosity, lest any part of their body should be found unworthy of the royal embraces. Cœy.

but divorce was permitted by the Roman law, and the fierce passions of the tyrant demanded an immediate gratification. The answer of Valeria was such as became the daughter and widow of emperors; but it was tempered by the prudence which her defenceless condition compelled her to observe. She represented to the persons whom Maximin had employed on this occasion, "that even if honour could permit a woman of her character and dignity to entertain a thought of second nuptials, decency at least must forbid her to listen to his addresses at a time when the ashes of her husband and his benefactor were still warm, and while the sorrows of her mind were still expressed by her mourning garments. She ventured to declare, that she could place very little confidence in the professions of a man, whose cruel inconstancy was capable of repudiating a faithful and affectionate wife."<sup>a</sup> On this repulse, the love of Maximin was converted into fury; and as witnesses and judges were always at his disposal, it was easy for him to cover his fury with an appearance of legal proceedings, and to assault the reputation as well as the happiness of Valeria. Her estates were confiscated, her eunuchs and domestics devoted to the most inhuman tortures,

ness and disdain were considered as treason, and the obstinate fair one was condemned to be drowned. A custom was gradually introduced, that no person should marry a wife without the permission of the emperor, "ut ipse in omnibus nuptiis praeiugulator esset." Lactantius de M. P. c. 38.

<sup>a</sup> Lactantius de M. P. c. 39.

CHAP. and several innocent and respectable matrons,  
XIV. who were honoured with her friendship, suffered  
death, on a false accusation of adultery. The  
empress herself, together with her mother Prisca,  
was condemned to exile; and as they were igno-  
miniously hurried from place to place before they  
were confined to a sequestered village in the  
deserts of Syria, they exposed their shame and  
distress to the provinces of the East, which,  
during thirty years, had respected their august  
dignity. Diocletian made several ineffectual efforts  
to alleviate the misfortunes of his daughter; and,  
as the last return that he expected for the im-  
perial purple, which he had conferred upon  
Maximin, he entreated that Valeria might be  
permitted to share his retirement of Salona, and  
to close the eyes of her afflicted father.<sup>o</sup> He  
entreated, but as he could no longer threaten,  
his prayers were received with coldness and dis-  
dain; and the pride of Maximin was gratified,  
in treating Diocletian as a suppliant, and his  
daughter as a criminal. The death of Maximin  
seemed to assure the empresses of a favourable  
alteration in their fortune. The public disorders  
relaxed the vigilance of their guard, and they  
easily found means to escape from the place of  
their exile, and to repair, though with some  
precaution, and in disguise, to the court of Li-

<sup>o</sup> Diocletian at last sent cognatum suum, quendam militarem ac  
potentem virum, to intercede in favour of his daughter (Lactantius  
de M. P. c. 41). We are not sufficiently acquainted with the history  
of these times to point out the person who was employed.

cinius. His behaviour, in the first days of his reign, and the honourable reception which he gave to young Candidianus, inspired Valeria with a secret satisfaction, both on her own account, and on that of her adopted son. But these grateful prospects were soon succeeded by horror and astonishment; and the bloody executions which stained the palace of Nicomedia, sufficiently convinced her, that the throne of Maximin was filled by a tyrant more inhuman than himself. Valeria consulted her safety by a hasty flight, and, still accompanied by her mother Prisca, they wandered about fifteen months<sup>p</sup> through the provinces, concealed in the disguise of plebeian habits. They were at length discovered at Thessalonica; and as the sentence of their death was already pronounced, they were immediately beheaded, and their bodies thrown into the sea. The people gazed on the melancholy spectacle; but their grief and indignation were suppressed by the terrors of a military guard. Such was the unworthy fate of the wife and daughter of Diocletian. We lament their misfortunes; we cannot discover their crimes; and whatever idea we may justly entertain of the cruelty of Licinius, it remains a matter of sur-

<sup>p</sup> Valeria quoque per varias provincias quindecim mensibus plebeio cultu pervagata. Lactantius de M. P. c. 51. There is some doubt whether we should compute the fifteen months from the moment of her exile, or from that of her escape. The expression of *pervagata* seems to denote the latter; but in that case we must suppose that the treatise of Lactantius was written after the first civil war between Licinius and Constantine. See Cuper, p. 254.

CHAP. <sup>XIV.</sup> prise, that he was not contented with some more secret and decent method of revenge.<sup>4</sup>

Quarrel  
between  
Constantine and  
Licinius,  
A. D. 314.

The Roman world was now divided between Constantine and Licinius, the former of whom was master of the West, and the latter of the East. It might perhaps have been expected that the conquerors, fatigued with civil war, and connected by a private as well as public alliance, would have renounced, or at least would have suspended, any farther designs of ambition; and yet a year had scarcely elapsed after the death of Maximin, before the victorious emperors turned their arms against each other. The genius, the success, and the aspiring temper, of Constantine, may seem to mark him out as the aggressor; but the perfidious character of Licinius justifies the most unfavourable suspicions; and by the faint light which history reflects on this transaction, we may discover a conspiracy fomented by his arts against the authority of his colleague. Constantine had lately given his sister Anastasia in marriage to Bassianus, a man of a considerable family and fortune, and had elevated his new kinsman to the rank of Cæsar. According to the system of government instituted by Diocletian, Italy, and perhaps Africa, were designed

<sup>4</sup> Ita illis pudicitia et conditio exitio fuit. Lactantius de M. P. c. 51. He relates the misfortunes of the innocent wife and daughter of Diocletian with a very natural mixture of pity and exultation.

The curious reader, who consults the Valesian Fragment, p. 713, will perhaps accuse me of giving a bold and licentious paraphrase; but if he considers it with attention, he will acknowledge that my interpretation is probable and consistent.

for his departments in the empire. But the performance of the promised favour was either attended with so much delay, or accompanied with so many unequal conditions, that the fidelity of Bassianus was alienated rather than secured by the honourable distinction which he had obtained. His nomination had been ratified by the consent of Licinius; and that artful prince, by the means of his emissaries, soon contrived to enter into a secret and dangerous correspondence with the new Cæsar, to irritate his discontents, and to urge him to the rash enterprise of extorting by violence what he might in vain solicit from the justice of Constantine. But the vigilant emperor discovered the conspiracy before it was ripe for execution; and after solemnly renouncing the alliance of Bassianus, despoiled him of the purple, and inflicted the deserved punishment on his treason and ingratitude. The haughty refusal of Licinius, when he was required to deliver up the criminals, who had taken refuge in his dominions, confirmed the suspicions already entertained of his perfidy; and the indignities offered at Æmona, on the frontiers of Italy, to the statues of Constantine, became the signal of discord between the two princes.

The first battle was fought near Cibalis, a city of Pannonia, situated on the river Save, about First civil war between them.

\* The situation of *Emona*, or, as it is now called, *Laybach*, in Carniola (d'Anville *Geographic Ancienne*, tom. i, p. 187), may suggest a conjecture. As it lay to the north-east of the Julian Alps, that important territory became a natural object of dispute between the sovereigns of Italy and of Illyricum.

CHAP.  
XIV.Battle of  
Cibalis,  
A. D. 315,  
8th Oct.

fifty miles above Sirmium<sup>t</sup>. From the inconsiderable forces which in this important contest two such powerful monarchs brought into the field, it may be inferred, that the one was suddenly provoked, and that the other was unexpectedly surprised. The emperor<sup>o</sup> of the West had only twenty thousand, and the sovereign of the East no more than five and thirty thousand, men. The inferiority of number was, however, compensated by the advantage of the ground. Constantine had taken post in a defile about half a mile in breadth, between a steep hill and a deep morass, and in that situation he steadily expected and repulsed the first attack of the enemy. He pursued his success, and advanced into the plain. But the veteran legions of Illyricum rallied under the standard of a leader who had been trained to arms in the school of Probus and Diocletian. The missile weapons on both sides were soon exhausted; the two armies, with equal valour, rushed to a closer engagement of swords and spears, and the doubtful contest had already lasted from the dawn of the day to a late hour of the evening, when the right wing, which Constantine led in person, made a vigorous and decisive charge. The judicious retreat of Licinius saved

<sup>t</sup> Cibalis or Cibalæ (whose name is still preserved in the obscure ruins of Swilei) was situated about fifty miles from Sirmium, the capital of Illyricum, and about one hundred from Taurunum, or Belgrade, and the conflux of the Danube and the Save. The Roman garrisons and cities on those rivers are finely illustrated by M. d'Anville, in a memoir inserted in l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom.

the remainder of his troops from a total defeat; but when he computed his loss, which amounted to more than twenty thousand men, he thought it unsafe to pass the night in the presence of an active and victorious enemy. Abandoning his camp and magazines, he marched away with secrecy and diligence at the head of the greatest part of his cavalry, and was soon removed beyond the danger of a pursuit. His diligence preserved his wife, his son, and his treasures, which he had deposited at Sirmium. Licinius passed through that city, and breaking down the bridge on the Save, hastened to collect a new army in Dacia and Thrace. In his flight he bestowed the precarious title of Cæsar on Valens, his general of the Illyrian frontier.<sup>a</sup>

The plain of Mardia in Thrace was the theatre of a second battle no less obstinate and bloody than the former. The troops on both sides displayed the same valour and discipline; and the victory was once more decided by the superior abilities of Constantine, who directed a body of five thousand men to gain an advantageous height, from whence, during the heat of the action, they attacked the rear of the enemy, and made a very considerable slaughter. The troops of Licinius, however, presenting a double front, still maintained their ground, till the approach of night put an end to the combat, and secured their re-

<sup>a</sup> Zosimus (l. ii, p. 90, 91) gives a very particular account of this battle; but the descriptions of Zosimus are rhetorical rather than military.

CHAP. treat towards the mountains of Macedonia.\*  
 XIV. The loss of two battles, and of his bravest veterans, reduced the fierce spirit of Licinius to sue for peace. His ambassador Mistrianus was admitted to the audience of Constantine; he expatiated on the common topics of moderation and humanity, which are so familiar to the eloquence of the vanquished; represented, in the most insinuating language, that the event of the war was still doubtful, whilst its inevitable calamities were alike pernicious to both the contending parties; and declared, that he was authorised to propose a lasting and honourable peace in the name of the *two* emperors his masters. Constantine received the mention of Valens with indignation and contempt. "It was not for such a purpose," he sternly replied, "that we have advanced from the shores of the western ocean in an uninterrupted course of combats and victories, that, after rejecting an ungrateful kinsman, we should accept for our colleague a contemptible slave. The abdication of Valens is the first article of the treaty."\*

\* Zosimus, i. ii. p. 92, 93. Anonym. Valesian. p. 713. The epitomes furnish some circumstances; but they frequently confound the two wars between Licinius and Constantine.

\* Petrus Patricius in Excerpt. Legat. p. 27. If it should be thought that *γαμβέος* signifies more properly a son-in-law, we might conjecture that Constantine, assuming the name as well as the duties of a father, had adopted his younger brothers and sisters, the children of Theodora. But in the best authors *γαμβέος* sometimes signifies a husband, sometimes a father-in-law, and sometimes a kinsman in general. See Spanheim Observat. ad Julian. Orat. i. p. 72.

It was necessary to accept this humiliating condition ; and the unhappy Valens, after a reign of a few days, was deprived of the purple and of his life. As soon as this obstacle was removed, the tranquillity of the Roman world was easily restored. The successive defeats of Licinius had ruined his forces, but they had displayed his courage and abilities. His situation was almost desperate, but the efforts of despair are sometimes formidable ; and the good sense of Constantine preferred a great and certain advantage to a third trial of the chance of arms. He consented to leave his rival, or, as he again styled Licinius, his friend and brother, in the possession of Thrace, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt ; but the provinces of Pannonia, Dalmatia, Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece, were yielded to the Western empire ; and the dominions of Constantine now extended from the confines of Caledonia to the extremity of Peloponnesus. It was stipulated by the same treaty, that three royal youths, the sons of the emperors, should be called to the hopes of the succession. Crispus and the young Constantine were soon afterwards declared Cæsars in the West, while the younger Licinius was invested with the same dignity in the East. In this double proportion of honours, the conqueror asserted the superiority of his arms and power.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Zosimus, l. ii, p. 93. Anonym. Valesian, p. 713. Eutropius, 3, v. Aurelius Victor. Euseb. in Chron. Sozomen, l. i, c. 2. Four of these writers affirm that the promotion of the Cæsars was an article of

CHAP.

XIV.

General  
peace and  
laws of  
Constan-  
tine,  
A. D. 315-  
323.

The reconciliation of Constantine and Licinius, though it was embittered by resentment and jealousy, by the remembrance of recent injuries, and by the apprehension of future dangers, maintained, however, above eight years, the tranquillity of the Roman world. As a very regular series of the imperial laws commences about this period, it would not be difficult to transcribe the civil regulations which employed the leisure of Constantine. But the most important of his institutions are intimately connected with the new system of policy and religion, which was not perfectly established till the last and peaceful years of his reign. There are many of his laws, which, as far as they concern the rights and property of individuals, and the practice of the bar, are more properly referred to the private than to the public jurisprudence of the empire; and he published many edicts of so local and temporary a nature, that they would ill deserve the notice of a general history. Two laws, however, may be selected from the crowd; the one for its importance, the other for its singularity; the former for its remarkable benevolence, the latter for its excessive severity. 1. The horrid practice, so familiar to the ancients, of exposing or murdering their new-born infants, was be-

of the treaty. It is, however, certain, that the younger Constantine and Licinius were not yet born; and that it is highly probable that the promotion was made the 1st of March, A. D. 317. The treaty had probably stipulated that two Caesars might be created by the Western, and one only by the Eastern, emperor; but each of them reserved to himself the choice of the persons.

come every day more frequent in the provinces, and especially in Italy. It was the effect of distress; and the distress was principally occasioned by the intolerable burden of taxes, and by the vexatious as well as cruel prosecutions of the officers of the revenue against their insolvent debtors. The less opulent or less industrious part of mankind, instead of rejoicing in an increase of family, deemed it an act of paternal tenderness to release their children from the impending miseries of a life which they themselves were unable to support. The humanity of Constantine, moved, perhaps, by some recent and extraordinary instances of despair, engaged him to address an edict to all the cities of Italy, and afterwards of Africa, directing immediate and sufficient relief to be given to those parents who should produce before the magistrates the children whom their own poverty would not allow them to educate. But the promise was too liberal, and the provision too vague, to effect any general or permanent benefit.<sup>a</sup> The law, though it may merit some praise, served rather to display than to alleviate the public distress. It still remains an authentic monument to contradict and confound those venal orators, who were too well satisfied with their own situation to discover either vice or misery under the government of a generous sovereign.<sup>b</sup> 2. The laws of Constan-

<sup>a</sup> Codex Theodosian. l. xi, tit. 27, tom. iv, p. 188, with Godfrey's observations. See likewise l. v, tit. 7, 8.

<sup>b</sup> *Omnia foris placita, domi prospera, annonae ubertate, fructuum copia, &c.* Panegyr. Vet. x, 38. This oration of Nazarius was pronounced

CHAP. tine against rapes were dictated with very little  
XIV. indulgence for the most amiable weaknesses of  
human nature; since the description of that  
crime was applied not only to the brutal violence  
which compelled, but even to the gentle seduc-  
tion which might persuade, an unmarried wo-  
man, under the age of twenty-five, to leave the  
house of her parents. "The successful ravisher  
" was punished with death; and as if simple  
" death was inadequate to the enormity of his  
" guilt, he was either burnt alive, or torn in  
" pieces by wild beasts in the amphitheatre.  
" The virgin's declaration that she had been  
" carried away with her own consent, instead of  
" saving her lover, exposed her to share his fate.  
" The duty of a public prosecution was intrusted  
" to the parents of the guilty or unfortunate  
" maid; and if the sentiments of nature pre-  
" vailed on them to dissemble the injury, and  
" to repair by a subsequent marriage the honour  
" of their family, they were themselves punished  
" by exile and confiscation. The slaves, whe-  
" ther male or female, who were convicted of  
" having been accessory to the rape or seduction,  
" were burnt alive, or put to death by the in-  
" genious torture of pouring down their throats  
" a quantity of melted lead. As the crime was  
" of a public kind, the accusation was permitted  
" even to strangers. The commencement of  
" the action was not limited to any term of  
" years, and the consequences of the sentence

pronounced on the day of the quinquennalia of the Cæsars, the 1st  
of March, A. D. 321.

“ were extended to the innocent offspring of such an irregular union.”<sup>c</sup> But whenever the offence inspires less horror than the punishment, the rigour of penal law is obliged to give way to the common feelings of mankind. The most odious parts of this edict were softened or repealed in the subsequent reigns;<sup>d</sup> and even Constantine himself very frequently alleviated, by partial acts of mercy, the stern temper of his general institutions. Such, indeed, was the singular humour of that emperor, who shewed himself as indulgent, and even remiss, in the execution of his laws, as he was severe, and even cruel, in the enacting of them. It is scarcely possible to observe a more decisive symptom of weakness, either in the character of the prince, or in the constitution of the government.<sup>e</sup>

The civil administration was sometimes interrupted by the military defence of the empire. Crispus, a youth of the most amiable character, who had received with the title of Cæsar the command of the Rhine, distinguished his conduct, as well as valour, in several victories over the Franks and Alemanni; and taught the bar-

CHAP.  
XIV.The Gothic  
war,  
A. D. 322.

<sup>c</sup> See the edict of Constantine, addressed to the Roman people, in the Theodosian Code, l. ix, tit. 24, tom. iii, p. 189.

<sup>d</sup> His son very fairly assigns the true reason of the repeal, “ Ne sub specie atrocioris judicii aliqua in uiciscendo criminis dilatio nasceretur.” Cod. Theod. tom. iii, p. 193.

<sup>e</sup> Eusebius (in Vitâ Constant. l. iii, c. 1) chooses to affirm, that in the reign of this hero, the sword of justice hung idle in the hands of the magistrates. Eusebius himself (l. iv, c. 29, 54) and the Theodosian Code will inform us, that this excessive lenity was not owing to the want either of atrocious criminals, or of penal laws.

CHAP. barians of that frontier to dread the eldest son  
 XIV. of Constantine, and the grandson of Constantius.<sup>f</sup> The emperor himself had assumed the more difficult and important province of the Danube. The Goths, who in the time of Claudius and Aurelian had felt the weight of the Roman arms, respected the power of the empire, even in the midst of its intestine divisions. But the strength of that warlike nation was now restored by a peace of near fifty years; a new generation had arisen, who no longer remembered the misfortunes of ancient days: the Sarmatians of the lake Mœotis followed the Gothic standard, either as subjects or as allies; and their united force was poured upon the countries of Illyricum. Campona, Margus, and Bononia, appear to have been the scenes of several memorable sieges and battles;<sup>g</sup> and though Constantine encountered a very obstinate resistance, he prevailed at length in the contest, and the Goths were compelled to purchase an ignominious retreat, by restoring the booty and prisoners which they had taken. Nor was this advantage sufficient to satisfy the indignation of the emperor. He resolved to chastise, as well as to repulse, the insolent barbarians who had

<sup>f</sup> Nazarius in *Panegyr. Vet. x.* The victory of Crispus over the Alemanni is expressed on some medals.

<sup>g</sup> See Zosimus, 1. ii, p. 93, 94; though the narrative of that historian is neither clear nor consistent. The *Panegyric of Optatianus* (c. 23) mentions the alliance of the Sarmatians with the Carpi and Getae, and points out the several fields of battle. It is supposed that the Sarmatian games, celebrated in the month of November, derived their origin from the success of this war.

dared to invade the territories of Rome. At the head of his legions he passed the Danube, after repairing the bridge which had been constructed by Trajan, penetrated into the strongest recesses of Dacia;<sup>h</sup> and when he had inflicted a severe revenge, condescended to give peace to the suppliant Goths, on condition that, as often as they were required, they should supply his armies with a body of forty thousand soldiers.<sup>i</sup> Exploits like these were no doubt honourable to Constantine, and beneficial to the state; but it may surely be questioned, whether they can justify the exaggerated assertion of Eusebius, that *all Scythia*, as far as the extremity of the north, divided as it was into so many names and nations of the most various and savage manners, had been added by his victorious arms to the Roman empire.<sup>k</sup>

In this exalted state of glory it was impossible that Constantine should any longer endure a partner in the empire. Confiding in the superiority of his genius and military power, he determined, without any previous injury, to exert

<sup>h</sup> In the *Cæsars* of Julian (p. 329, *Commentaire de Spanheim*, p. 252) Constantine boasts, that he had recovered the province (Dacia) which Trajan had subdued. But it is insinuated by Silenus, that the conquests of Constantine were like the gardens of Adonis, which fade and wither almost the moment they appear.

<sup>i</sup> *Jornandes de Rebus Geticis*, c. 21. I know not whether we may entirely depend on his authority. Such an alliance has a very recent air, and scarcely is suited to the maxims of the beginning of the fourth century.

<sup>k</sup> Eusebius in *Vit. Constantin.* l. i. c. 8. This passage, however, is taken from a general declamation on the greatness of Constantine, and not from any particular account of the Gothic war.

Second  
civil war  
between  
Constantine and  
Licinius,  
A. D. 323.

CHAP. them for the destruction of Licinius, whose ad-  
XIV. vanced age and unpopular vices seemed to offer  
..... a very easy conquest.<sup>1</sup> But the old emperor,  
awakened by the approaching danger, deceived  
the expectations of his friends, as well as of his  
enemies. Calling forth that spirit and those  
abilities by which he had deserved the friendship  
of Galerius and the imperial purple, he prepared  
himself for the contest, collected the forces of  
the East, and soon filled the plains of Hadri-  
anople with his troops, and the straits of the  
Hellespont with his fleet. The army consisted  
of one hundred and fifty thousand foot, and  
fifteen thousand horse; and as the cavalry was  
drawn, for the most part, from Phrygia and  
Cappadocia, we may conceive a more favourable  
opinion of the beauty of the horses, than of the  
courage and dexterity of their riders. The fleet  
was composed of three hundred and fifty gallies  
of three ranks of oars. An hundred and thirty  
of these were furnished by Egypt and the adja-  
cent coast of Africa. An hundred and ten sailed  
from the ports of Phœnicia and the isle of Cy-  
prus; and the maritime countries of Bithynia,  
Ionia, and Caria, were likewise obliged to pro-  
vide an hundred and ten gallies. The troops of  
Constantine were ordered to rendezvous at Thes-  
salonica; they amounted to above an hundred

<sup>1</sup> *Constantinus tamen, vir ingens, et omnia efficere nitens qua  
animo preparasset, simul principatum totius orbis affectans, Licinio  
bellum intulit.* Eutropius, x, 5. Zosimus, l. ii, p. 89. The reasons  
which they have assigned for the first civil war may, with more  
propriety, be applied to the second.

and twenty thousand horse and foot.<sup>m</sup> Their emperor was satisfied with their martial appearance, and his army contained more soldiers, though fewer men, than that of his eastern competitor. The legions of Constantine were levied in the warlike provinces of Europe; action had confirmed their discipline, victory had elevated their hopes, and there were among them a great number of veterans, who, after seventeen glorious campaigns under the same leader, prepared themselves to deserve an honourable dismission by a last effort of their valour.<sup>n</sup> But the naval preparations of Constantine were in every respect much inferior to those of Licinius. The maritime cities of Greece sent their respective quotas of men and ships to the celebrated harbour of Piræus, and their united forces consisted of no more than two hundred small vessels: a very feeble armament, if it is compared with those formidable fleets which were equipped and maintained by the republic of Athens during the Peloponnesian war.<sup>o</sup> Since Italy was no longer

<sup>m</sup> Zosimus, I. ii, p. 94, 95.

<sup>n</sup> Constantine was very attentive to the privileges and comforts of his fellow-veterans (Conveterani), as he now began to style them. See the Theodosian Code, I. vii, tit. 20, tom. ii, p. 419, 429.

<sup>o</sup> Whilst the Athenians maintained the empire of the sea, their fleet consisted of three, and afterwards of four, hundred gallies of three ranks of oars, all completely equipped and ready for immediate service. The arsenal in the port of Piræus had cost the republic a thousand talents, about two hundred and sixteen thousand pounds. See Thucydides de Bel. Pelopon. I. ii, c. 13, and Meursius de Fortuna Attica, c. 19.

CHAP. the seat of government, the naval establishments  
XIV. of Misenum and Ravenna had been gradually  
~~~~~ neglected; and as the shipping and mariners of  
the empire were supported by commerce rather
than by war, it was natural that they should the
most abound in the industrious provinces of Egypt
and Asia. It is only surprising that the eastern
emperor, who possessed so great a superiority at
sea, should have neglected the opportunity of
carrying an offensive war into the centre of his
rival's dominions.

Battle of
Hadrian-
ople,
A. D. 323,
July 3.

Instead of embracing such an active resolution,
which might have changed the whole face of the
war, the prudent Licinius expected the approach
of his rival in a camp near Hadrianople, which
he had fortified with an anxious care that be-
trayed his apprehension of the event. Constan-
tine directed his march from Thessalonica to-
wards that part of Thrace, till he found himself
stopped by the broad and rapid stream of the
Hebrus, and discovered the numerous army of
Licinius, which filled the steep ascent of the hill,
from the river to the city of Hadrianople. Many
days were spent in doubtful and distant skir-
mishes; but at length the obstacles of the passage
and of the attack were removed by the intrepid
conduct of Constantine. In this place we might
relate a wonderful exploit of Constantine, which,
though it can scarcely be paralleled either in
poetry or romance, is celebrated, not by a venal
orator, devoted to his fortune, but by an histo-
rian, the partial enemy of his fame. We are

assured that the valiant emperor threw himself into the river Hebrus, accompanied only by twelve horsemen, and that by the effort or terror of his invincible arm, he broke, slaughtered, and put to flight, a host of an hundred and fifty thousand men. The credulity of Zosimus prevailed so strongly over his passion, that among the events of the memorable battle of Hadrianople, he seems to have selected and embellished, not the most important, but the most marvellous. The valour and danger of Constantine are attested by a slight wound which he received in the thigh; but it may be discovered even from an imperfect narration, and perhaps a corrupted text, that the victory was obtained no less by the conduct of the general than by the courage of the hero; that a body of five thousand archers marched round to occupy a thick wood in the rear of the enemy, whose attention was diverted by the construction of a bridge, and that Licinius, perplexed by so many artful evolutions, was reluctantly drawn from his advantageous post to combat on equal ground in the plain. The contest was no longer equal. His confused multitude of new levies was easily vanquished by the experienced veterans of the West. Thirty-four thousand men are reported to have been slain. The fortified camp of Licinius was taken by assault the evening of the battle; the greater part of the fugitives, who had retired to the mountains, surrendered themselves the next day to the discretion of the conqueror; and his rival,

CHAP.
XIV.

CHAP. who could no longer keep the field, confined him-
 XIV. self within the walls of Byzantium.^p

Siege of
Byzan-
tium, and
naval vic-
tory of
Crispus.

The siege of Byzantium, which was immediately undertaken by Constantine, was attended with great labour and uncertainty. In the late civil wars, the fortifications of that place, so justly considered as the key of Europe and Asia, had been repaired and strengthened; and as long as Licinius remained master of the sea, the garrison was much less exposed to the danger of famine than the army of the besiegers. The naval commanders of Constantine were summoned to his camp, and received his positive orders to force the passage of the Hellespont, as the fleet of Licinius, instead of seeking and destroying their feeble enemy, continued inactive in those narrow straits where its superiority of numbers was of little use or advantage. Crispus, the emperor's eldest son, was intrusted with the execution of this daring enterprise, which he performed with so much courage and success, that he deserved the esteem, and most probably excited the jealousy, of his father. The engagement lasted two days; and in the evening of the first, the contending fleets, after a considerable and mutual loss, retired into their respective harbours of Europe and Asia. The second day

^p Zosimus, 1. ii, p. 95, 96. This great battle is described in the Valesian fragment (p. 714) in a clear though concise manner. " Licinius vero circum Hadriapolin maximo exercitu latera ardui montis impleverat; illuc toto agmine Constantinus inflexit. Cum bellum terrâ marique traheretur, quamvis per arduum suis nitentibus, attamen disciplinâ militari et felicitate, Constantinus Licinnii confusura et sine ordine agentem vicit exercitum; levitur femore sauciatus."

about noon a strong south wind¹ sprang up, which carried the vessels of Crispus against the enemy; and as the casual advantage was improved by his skilful intrepidity, he soon obtained a complete victory. An hundred and thirty vessels were destroyed, five thousand men were slain, and Amandus, the admiral of the Asiatic fleet, escaped with the utmost difficulty to the shores of Chalcedon. As soon as the Hellespont was open, a plentiful convoy of provisions flowed into the camp of Constantine, who had already advanced the operations of the siege. He constructed artificial mounds of earth of an equal height with the ramparts of Byzantium. The lofty towers which were erected on that foundation galled the besieged with large stones and darts from the military engines, and the battering rams had shaken the walls in several places. If Licinius persisted much longer in the defence, he exposed himself to be involved in the ruin, of the place. Before he was surrounded he prudently removed his person and treasures to Chalcedon in Asia; and as he was always desirous of associating companions to the hopes and dangers of his fortune, he now bestowed the title of Cæsar on Martinianus, who exercised one of the most important offices of the empire².

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¹ Zosimus, l. ii, p. 97, 98. The current always sets out of the Hellespont; and when it is assisted by a north wind, no vessel can attempt the passage. A south wind renders the force of the current almost imperceptible. See Tournefort's *voyage au Levant*, let: xi.

² Aurelius Victor. Zosimus, l. ii, p. 98. According to the latter, Martinianus was *magister officiorum* (he uses the Latin appellation in Greek). Some medals seem to intimate, that during his short reign he received the title of *Augustus*.

CHAP.
XIV.Battle of
Chrysopo-
lis.Submis-
sion and
death of
Licinius.

Such was still the resources, and such the abilities, of Licinius, that, after so many successive defeats, he collected in Bithynia a new army of fifty or sixty thousand men, while the activity of Constantine was employed in the siege of Byzantium. The vigilant emperor did not however neglect the last struggles of his antagonist. A considerable part of his victorious army was transported over the Bosphorus in small vessels, and the decisive engagement was fought soon after the landing, on the heights of Chrysopolis, or, as it is now called, of Scutari. The troops of Licinius, though they were lately raised, ill armed, and worse disciplined, made head against their conquerors with fruitless but desperate valour, till a total defeat, and the slaughter of five and twenty thousand men, irretrievably determined the fate of their leader.⁵ He retired to Nicomedia, rather with the view of gaining some time for negociation, than with the hope of any effectual defence. Constantia, his wife and the sister of Constantine, interceded with her brother in favour of her husband, and obtained from his policy rather than from his compassion, a solemn promise, confirmed by an oath, that after the sacrifice of Martinianus, and the resignation of the purple, Licinius himself should be permitted to pass the remainder of his life in peace and affluence. The behaviour of Constantia, and her relation to the contending parties, naturally

⁵ Eusebius (in *Vitâ Constantini*. l. ii, c. 16, 17) ascribes this decisive victory to the pious prayers of the emperor. The Valesian fragment (p. 714) mentions a body of Gothic auxiliaries, under their chief Aliquaca, who adhered to the party of Licinius.

recalls the remembrance of that virtuous matron who was the sister of Augustus, and the wife of Antony. But the temper of mankind was altered; and it was no longer esteemed infamous for a Roman to survive his honour and independence. Licinius solicited and accepted the pardon of his offences, laid himself and his purple at the feet of his *lord* and *master*, was raised from the ground with insulting pity, was admitted the same day to the imperial banquet, and soon afterwards was sent away to Thessalonica, which had been chosen for the place of his confinement.^t His confinement was soon terminated by death; and it is doubtful whether a tumult of the soldiers, or a decree of the senate, was suggested as a motive for his execution. According to the rules of tyranny, he was accused of forming a conspiracy, and of holding a treasonable correspondence with the barbarians; but as he was never convicted, either by his own conduct or by any legal evidence, we may perhaps be allowed, from his weakness, to presume his innocence.^u The memory of Licinius was branded with infamy, his statues were thrown down, and, by a hasty edict, of such mischievous

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^t Zosimus, l. ii, p. 102. Victor Junior in Epitome. Anonym. Valesian, p. 714.

^u Contra religionem sacramenti Thessalonicae privatus occisus est. Eutropius, x, 6, and his evidence is confirmed by Jerome (in Chronic.) as well as by Zosimus, l. ii, p. 102. The Valesian writer is the only one who mentions the soldiers, and it is Zonaras alone who calls in the assistance of the senate. Eusebius prudently slides over this delicate transaction. But Sozomen, a century afterwards, ventures to assert the treasonable practices of Licinius.

CHAP. tendency that it was almost immediately correct-
XIV. ed, all his laws, and all the judicial proceedings
----- of his reign, were at once abolished.* By this
Re-union victory of Constantine, the Roman world was
of the em- again united under the authority of one emperor,
pire, thirty-seven years after Diocletian had divided
A. D. 324. his power and provinces with his associate Max-
imian.

The successive steps of the elevation of Constantine, from his first assuming the purple at York, to the resignation of Licinius at Nicomedia, have been related with some minuteness and precision, not only as the events are in themselves both interesting and important, but still more as they contributed to the decline of the empire by the expence of blood and treasure, and by the perpetual increase as well of the taxes as of the military establishment. The foundation of Constantinople, and the establishment of the christian religion, were the immediate and memorable consequences of this revolution.

* See the Theodosian Code, l. xv, tit. 15, tom. v, p. 404, 405. These edicts of Constantine betray a degree of passion and precipitancy very unbecoming the character of a lawgiver.

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The progress of the christian religion, and the sentiments, manners, numbers, and condition, of the primitive christians.

A CANDID but rational inquiry into the progress and establishment of christianity may be considered as a very essential part of the history of the Roman empire. While the body was invaded by open violence, or undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the cross on the ruins of the capitol. Nor was the influence of christianity confined to the period or to the limits of the Roman empire. After a revolution of thirteen or fourteen centuries, that religion is still professed by the nations of Europe, the most distinguished portion of human kind in arts and learning as well as in arms. By the industry and zeal of the Europeans, it has been widely diffused to the most distant shores of Asia and Africa; and by the means of their colonies has been firmly established from Canada to Chili, in a world unknown to the ancients.

But this inquiry, however useful or entertaining, is attended with two peculiar difficulties. The scanty and suspicious materials of ecclesiastical

CHAP. tical history seldom enable us to dispel the dark
XV. cloud that hangs over the first age of the church.
The great law of impartiality too often obliges
us to reveal the imperfections of the uninspired
teachers and believers of the gospel; and, to a
careless observer, *their* faults may seem to cast a
shade on the faith which they professed. But the
scandal of the pious christian, and the fallacious
triumph of the infidel, should cease as soon as
they recollect not only *by whom*, but likewise *to whom*, the divine revelation was given. The
theologian may indulge the pleasing task of de-
scribing religion as she descended from heaven,
arrayed in her native purity. A more melan-
choly duty is imposed on the historian. He must
discover the inevitable mixture of error and cor-
ruption, which she contracted in a long resi-
dence upon earth, among a weak and degene-
rate race of beings.

Five causes of the growth of christianity.

Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire
by what means the christian faith obtained so re-
markable a victory over the established religions
of the earth. To this inquiry, an obvious but
satisfactory answer may be returned; that it was
owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine
itself, and to the ruling providence of its great
Author. But as truth and reason seldom find so
favourable a reception in the world, and as the
wisdom of providence frequently condescends to
use the passions of the human heart, and the ge-
neral circumstances of mankind, as instruments
to execute its purpose, we may still be permitted,

though with becoming submission, to ask, not **CHAP.**
indeed what were the first, but what were the se- **XV.**

condary causes of the rapid growth of the christian church? It will, perhaps, appear, that it was most effectually favoured and assisted by the five following causes: i. The inflexible, and, if we may use the expression, the intolerant zeal of the christians, derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and un-social spirit, which, instead of inviting, had deterred the gentiles from embracing the law of Moses. ii. The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth. iii. The miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive church. iv. The pure and austere morals of the christians. v. The union and discipline of the christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman empire.

i. We have already described the religious **THE FIRST**
harmony of the ancient world, and the facility **CAUSE.**
with which the most different and even hostile **Zeal of the**
nations embraced, or at least respected, each **Jews.**
other's superstitions. A single people refused
to join in the common intercourse of mankind.
The Jews, who, under the Assyrian and Persian
monarchies, had languished for many ages the
most despised portion of their slaves,^a emerged

^a *Dum Assyrios penes, Medosque, et Persas Oriens fuet, de spectissima pars servientium.* Tacit. Hist. v, 8. Herodotus, who visited Asia

CHAP. from obscurity under the successors of Alexander;
 XV. and as they multiplied to a surprising degree in
 the East, and afterwards in the West, they soon
 excited the curiosity and wonder of other nations.^b
 The sullen obstinacy with which they maintained
 their peculiar rites and unsocial manners seemed
 to mark them out a distinct species of men, who
 boldly professed, or who faintly disguised, their
 implacable hatred to the rest of human-kind.^c
 Neither the violence of Antiochus, nor the arts
 of Herod, nor the example of the circumjacent
 nations, could ever persuade the Jews to associate
 with the institutions of Moses the elegant mytho-
 logy of the Greeks.^d According to the maxims
 of universal toleration, the Romans protected a
 superstition which they despised.^e The polite
 Augustus condescended to give orders, that sacri-

Asia whilst it obeyed the last of those empires, slightly mentions the Syrians of Palestine, who, according to their own confession, had received from Egypt the right of circumcision. See I. ii, c. 104.

^b Diodorus Siculus, I. xl, Dion. Cassius, I. xxxvii, p. 121. Tacit. Hist. v, 1-9. Justin. xxxvi, 2, 3.

^c Tradidit arcane quæcumque volumine Moses,

Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti,

Quæsitos ad fontes solos deducere verpas.

The letter of this law is not to be found in the present volume of Moses. But the wise, the humane Maimonides openly teaches, that if an idolater fall into the water, a Jew ought not to save him from instant death. See Basnage, Historie des Juifs, I. vi, c. 28.

^d A Jewish sect, which indulged themselves in a sort of occasional conformity, derived from Herod, by whose example and authority they had been seduced, the name of Herodians. But their numbers were so inconsiderable, and their duration so short, that Josephus has not thought them worthy of his notice. See Prideaux's Connexion, vol. ii, p. 285.

^e Cicero pro Flacco, c. 28.

fices should be offered for his prosperity in the CHAP.
temple of Jerusalem;^f while the meanest of the XV.
posterity of Abraham, who should have paid
the same homage to the Jupiter of the capitol,
would have been an object of abhorrence to him-
self and to his brethren. But the moderation of
the conquerors was insufficient to appease the
jealous prejudices of their subjects, who were
alarmed and scandalized at the ensigns of pagan-
ism, which necessarily introduced themselves into
a Roman province.^g The mad attempt of Ca-
ligula to place his own statue in the temple of
Jerusalem was defeated by the unanimous reso-
lution of a people who dreaded death much less
than such an idolatrous profanation.^h Their
attachment to the law of Moses was equal to
their detestation of foreign religions. The cur-
rent of zeal and devotion, as it was contracted
into a narrow channel, ran with the strength,
and sometimes with the fury, of a torrent.

This inflexible perseverance, which appeared so odious or so ridiculous to the ancient world,^{Its gradual increase.}
assumes a more awful character, since Providence
has deigned to reveal to us the mysterious history

^f Philo de Legatione. Augustus left a foundation for a perpetual sacrifice. Yet he approved of the neglect which his grandson Caius expressed towards the temple of Jerusalem. See Sueton. in August. c. 93, and Casaubon's notes on that passage.

^g See, in particular, Joseph. Antiquitat. xvii, 6, xviii, 3, and de Bel. Judaic. i, 33, and ii, 9. Edit. Havercamp.

^h Jussi a Caio Casare effigiem ejus in templo locare arma potius sumpsere. Tacit. Hist. v, 9. Philo and Josephus gave a very circumstantial, but a very rhetorical, account of this transaction, which exceedingly perplexed the governor of Syria. At the first mention of this idolatrous proposal, King Agrippa fainted away, and did not recover his senses till the third day.

CHAP. of the chosen people. But the devout and even
XV. scrupulous attachment to the Mosaic religion, so
conspicuous among the Jews who lived under
the second temple, becomes still more surprising
if it is compared with the stubborn incredulity
of their forefathers. When the law was given
in thunder from mount Sinai; when the tides of
the ocean, and the course of the planets were
suspended for the convenience of the Israelites;
and when temporal rewards and punishments
were the immediate consequences of their piety
or disobedience, they perpetually relapsed into
rebellion against the visible majesty of their Di-
vine King, placed the idols of the nations in the
sanctuary of Jehovah, and imitated every fan-
tastic ceremony that was practised in the tents of
the Arabs, or in the cities of Phœnicia.¹ As
the protection of Heaven was deservedly with-
drawn from the ungrateful race, their faith ac-
quired a proportionable degree of vigour and
purity. The contemporaries of Moses and Joshua
had beheld with careless indifference the most
amazing miracles. Under the pressure of every
calamity, the belief of those miracles has pre-
served the Jews of a later period from the uni-
versal contagion of idolatry; and in contradiction
to every known principle of the human mind,
that singular people seems to have yielded a
stronger and more ready assent to the traditions

¹ For the enumeration of the Syrian and Arabian deities, it may
be observed, that Milton has comprised in one hundred and thirty
very beautiful lines the two large and learned syntagmas, which Sel-
den had composed on that abstruse subject.

of their remote ancestors, than to the evidence CHAP.
XV. of their own senses.^k

The Jewish religion was admirably fitted for Their reli-
gion better
suited to
defence
than to
conquest. defence, but it was never designed for conquest; and it seems probable that the number of proselytes was never much superior to that of apostates. The divine promises were originally made, and the distinguishing rite of circumcision was enjoined, to a single family. When the posterity of Abraham had multiplied like the sands of the sea, the Deity, from whose mouth they received a system of laws and ceremonies, declared himself the proper, and as it were the national, God of Israel; and with the most jealous care separated his favourite people from the rest of mankind. The conquest of the land of Canaan was accompanied with so many wonderful and with so many bloody circumstances, that the victorious Jews were left in a state of irreconcilable hostility with all their neighbours. They had been commanded to extirpate some of the most idolatrous tribes, and the execution of the divine will had seldom been retarded by the weakness of humanity. With the other nations they were forbidden to contract any marriages or alliances; and the prohibition of receiving them into the congregation, which in some cases was perpetual, almost always extended to the third,

^k " How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they *believe* me, for all the *signs* which I have shewn among them?" (Numbers, xiv, 11). It would be easy, but it would be unbecoming, to justify the complaint of the deity from the whole tenor of the Mosaic history.

CHAP. to the seventh, or even to the tenth, generation.

XV. The obligation of preaching to the gentiles the faith of Moses, had never been inculcated as a precept of the law, nor were the Jews inclined to impose it on themselves as a voluntary duty. In the admission of new citizens, that unsocial people was actuated by the selfish vanity of the Greeks, rather than by the generous policy of Rome. The descendants of Abraham were flattered by the opinion, that they alone were the heirs of the covenant, and they were apprehensive of diminishing the value of their inheritance, by sharing it too easily with the strangers of the earth. A larger acquaintance with mankind extended their knowledge without correcting their prejudices; and whenever the God of Israel acquired any new votaries, he was much more indebted to the inconstant humour of polytheism than to the active zeal of his own missionaries.¹ The religion of Moses seems to be instituted for a particular country as well as for a single nation; and if a strict obedience had been paid to the order, that every male, three times in the year, should present himself before the Lord Jehovah, it would have been impossible that the Jews could ever have spread themselves beyond the narrow limits of the promised land.^m That obstacle was indeed removed by the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem; but the most con-

¹ All that relates to the Jewish proselytes has been very ably treated by Basnage, *Hist. des Juifs*, l. vi, c. 6, 7.

^m See Exod. xxiv. 23, Deut. xvi. 16, the commentators, and a very sensible note in the *Universal History*, vol. i, p. 603, edit. fol.

siderable part of the Jewish religion was involved in its destruction; and the pagans, who had long wondered at the strange report of an empty sanctuary,ⁿ were at a loss to discover what could be the object, or what could be the instruments, of a worship which was destitute of temples and of altars, of priests and of sacrifices. Yet even in their fallen state, the Jews, still asserting their lofty and exclusive privileges, shunned, instead of courting, the society of strangers. They still insisted, with inflexible rigour, on those parts of the law which it was in their power to practise. Their peculiar distinctions of days, of meats, and a variety of trivial, though burdensome, observances, were so many objects of disgust and aversion for the other nations, to whose habits and prejudices they were diametrically opposite. The painful, and even dangerous, rite of circumcision, was alone capable of repelling a willing proselyte from the door of the synagogue.^o

Under these circumstances, christianity offered itself to the world, armed with the strength of the mosaic law, and delivered from the weight of its fetters. An exclusive zeal for the truth of religion, and the unity of God, was as care-

ⁿ When Pompey, using or abusing the right of conquest, entered into the holy of holies, it was observed, with amazement, “ Nulla intus Deum effigie, vacuam sedem et inania arcana.” Tacit. Hist. v, 9. It was a popular saying, with regard to the Jews,

Nil præter nubes et cœli numen adorant.

^o A second kind of circumcision was inflicted on a Samaritan or Egyptian proselyte. The sullen indifference of the Talmudists, with respect to the conversion of strangers, may be seen in Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, l. vi, c. 6.

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fully inculcated in the new as in the ancient system: and whatever was now revealed to mankind, concerning the nature and designs of the Supreme Being, was fitted to increase their reverence for that mysterious doctrine. The divine authority of Moses and the prophets was admitted, and even established, as the firmest basis of christianity. From the beginning of the world, an uninterrupted series of predictions had announced and prepared the long expected coming of the messiah, who, in compliance with the gross apprehensions of the Jews, had been more frequently represented under the character of a king and conqueror, than under that of a prophet, a martyr, and the son of God. By his expiatory sacrifice, the imperfect sacrifices of the temple were at once consummated and abolished. The ceremonial law, which consisted only of types and figures, was succeeded by a pure and spiritual worship, equally adapted to all climates, as well as to every condition of mankind; and to the initiation of blood, was substituted a more harmless initiation of water. The promise of divine favour, instead of being partially confined to the posterity of Abraham, was universally proposed to the freeman and the slave, to the Greek and to the barbarian, to the Jew and to the gentile. Every privilege that could raise the proselyte from earth to heaven, that could exalt his devotion, secure his happiness, or even gratify that secret pride, which, under the semblance of devotion, insinuates itself into the human heart, was still reserved

for the members of the christian church; but CHAP. XV. at the same time all mankind was permitted, and even solicited, to accept the glorious distinction, which was not only proffered as a favour, but imposed as an obligation. It became the most sacred duty of a new convert to diffuse among his friends and relations the inestimable blessing which he had received, and to warn them against a refusal that would be severely punished as a criminal disobedience to the will of a benevolent but all-powerful deity.

The enfranchisement of the church from the bonds of the synagogue was a work, however, of some time and of some difficulty. The Jewish converts, who acknowledged Jesus in the character of the messiah, foretold by their ancient oracles, respected him as a prophetic teacher of virtue and religion; but they obstinately adhered to the ceremonies of their ancestors, and were desirous of imposing them on the gentiles, who continually augmented the number of believers. These judaising christians seem to have argued, with some degree of plausibility, from the divine origin of the mosaic law, and from the immutable perfections of its great author. They affirmed, *that* if the Being, who is the same through all eternity, had designed to abolish those sacred rites, which had served to distinguish his chosen people, the repeal of them would have been no less clear and solemn than their first promulgation: *that*, instead of those frequent declarations, which either suppose or assert the perpetuity of

CHAP. the mosaic religion, it would have been represented as a visionary scheme, intended to last only till the coming of the messiah, who should instruct mankind in a more perfect mode of faith and of worship :^p that the messiah himself, and his disciples who conversed with him on earth, instead of authorizing by their example the most minute observances of the mosaic law,^q would have published to the world the abolition of those useless and obsolete ceremonies, without suffering christianity to remain, during so many years, obscurely confounded among the sects of the Jewish church. Arguments like these appear to have been used in the defence of the expiring cause of the mosaic law ; but the industry of our learned divines has abundantly explained the ambiguous language of the Old Testament, and the ambiguous conduct of the apostolic teachers. It was proper gradually to unfold the system of the gospel, and to pronounce, with the utmost caution and tenderness, a sentence of condemnation so repugnant to the inclination and prejudices of the believing Jews.

^p These arguments were urged with great ingenuity by the Jew Orobio, and refuted with equal ingenuity and candour by the christian Limborch. See the *Amica Collatio* (it well deserves that name), on account of the dispute between them.

^q *Jesus... circumcisus erat; cibis utebatur Iudaicis; vestitū simili; purgatos scabie mittebat ad sacerdotes; Paschata et alios dies festos religiose observabat: Si quos sanavit Sabatho, ostendit non tantum ex lego, sed et exceptis sententiis talia opera sabathio non interdicta.* Grotius de veritate Religionis Christianae, I. v, c. 7. A little afterwards (c. 12) he expatiates on the condescension of the apostles.

The history of the church of Jerusalem affords a lively proof of the necessity of those precautions, and of the deep impression which the Jewish religion had made on the minds of its ^{The na-} _{zarene} ^{church of} _{Jerusalem.} ^{Chap.} _{XV.} taries. The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews; and the congregation over which they presided united the law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ.^{*} It was natural that the primitive tradition of a church which was founded only forty years after the death of Christ, and was governed almost as many years under the immediate inspection of his apostle, should be received as the standard of orthodoxy.[†] The distant churches very frequently appealed to the authority of their venerable parent, and relieved her distresses by a liberal contribution of alms. But when numerous and opulent societies were established in the great cities of the empire, in Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome, the reverence which Jerusalem had inspired to all the christian colonies insensibly diminished. The Jewish converts, or, as they were afterwards called, the nazarenes, who had laid the foundations of the church, soon found themselves overwhelmed by the increasing multitudes, that from all the various religions of

* Pæne omnes Christum Deum sub legis observatione credebant. Sulpicius Severus, ii, 31. See Eusebius, *Hist. Ecclesiast.* I. iv, c. 5.

† Mosheim de Rebus Christianis ante Constantinum Magnum, p. 153. In this masterly performance, which I shall often have occasion to quote, he enters much more fully into the state of the primitive church, than he has an opportunity of doing in his General History.

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polytheism enlisted under the banner of Christ; and the gentiles, who, with the approbation of their peculiar apostle, had rejected the intolerable weight of mosaic ceremonies, at length refused to their more scrupulous brethren the same toleration which at first they had humbly solicited for their own practice. The ruin of the temple, of the city, and of the public religion, of the Jews was severely felt by the nazarenes; as in their manners, though not in their faith, they maintained so intimate a connection with their impious countrymen, whose misfortunes were attributed by the pagans to the contempt, and more justly ascribed by the christians to the wrath, of the Supreme Deity. The nazarenes retired from the ruins of Jerusalem to the little town of Pella beyond the Jordan, where that ancient church languished about sixty years in solitude and obscurity.^t They still enjoyed the comfort of making frequent and devout visits to the *holy city*, and the hope of being one day restored to those seats which both nature and religion taught them to love as well as to revere. But at length, under the reign of Hadrian, the desperate fanaticism of the Jews filled up the measure of their calamities; and the Romans, exasperated by their repeated rebellions, exercised the rights of victory with unusual rigour. The emperor found-

^t Eusebius, I. iii, c. 5. Le Clerc, Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 605. During this occasional absence, the bishop and church of Pella still retained the title of Jerusalem. In the same manner, the Roman pontiffs resided seventy years at Avignon; and the patriarchs of Alexandria have long since transferred their episcopal seat to Cairo.

ed, under the name of *Ælia Capitolina*, a new CHAP.
XV. city on Mount Sion,* to which he gave the privileges of a colony; and denouncing the severest penalties against any of the Jewish people who should dare to approach its precincts, he fixed a vigilant garrison of a Roman cohort to enforce the execution of his orders. The nazarenes had only one way left to escape the common proscription, and the force of truth was on this occasion assisted by the influence of temporal advantages. They elected Marcus for their bishop, a prelate of the race of the gentiles, and most probably a native either of Italy or of some of the Latin provinces. At his persuasion, the most considerable part of the congregation renounced the mosaic law, in the practice of which they had persevered above a century. By this sacrifice of their habits and privileges, they purchased a free admission into the colony of Hadrian, and more firmly cemented their union with the catholic church.^x

When the name and honours of the church of Jerusalem had been restored to Mount Sion, the crimes of heresy and schism were imputed to the obscure remnant of the nazarenes which refused

* Dion Cassius, l. lxxix. The exile of the Jewish nation from Jerusalem is attested by Aristo of Pella (apud Euseb. l. iv, c. 6), and is mentioned by several ecclesiastical writers, though some of them too hastily extend this interdiction to the whole country of Palestine.

^x Eusebius, l. iv, c. 6). Sulpitius Severus, ii, 31. By comparing their unsatisfactory accounts, Mosheim (p. 327, &c.) has drawn out a very distinct representation of the circumstances and motives of this revolution.

CHAP. to accompany their Latin bishop. They still
XV. preserved their former habitation of Pella, spread
~~~~~ themselves into the villages adjacent to Damas-  
cus, and formed an inconsiderable church in the  
city of Boæra, or, as it is now called, of Alep-  
po, in Syria.<sup>7</sup> The name of nazarenes was  
deemed too honourable for those christian Jews,  
and they soon received, from the supposed po-  
verty of their understanding, as well as of their  
condition, the contemptuous epithet of ebio-  
nites.<sup>8</sup> In a few years after the return of the  
church of Jerusalem, it became a matter of  
doubt and controversy, whether a man who sin-  
cerely acknowledged Jesus as the messiah, but  
who still continued to observe the law of Moses,  
could possibly hope for salvation. The humane  
temper of Justin Martyr inclined him to answer  
this question in the affirmative; and though he  
expressed himself with the most guarded diffi-  
dence, he ventured to determine in favour of  
such an imperfect christian, if he were content  
to practise the mosaic ceremonies, without pre-

<sup>7</sup> Le Clerc (Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 477, 535) seems to have collected from Eusebius, Jerome, Epiphanius, and other writers, all the prin-  
cipal circumstances that relate to the nazarenes or ebionites. The  
nature of their opinions soon divided them into a stricter and a milder  
sect; and there is some reason to conjecture, that the family of Je-  
sus Christ remained members, at least, of the latter and more mod-  
erate party.

<sup>8</sup> Some writers have been pleased to create an Ebion, the imagin-  
ary author of their sect and name. But we can more safely rely on  
the learned Eusebius than on the vehement Tertullian, or the credu-  
lous Epiphanius. According to Le Clerc, the Hebrew word *ebjonim*  
may be translated into Latin by that of *pauperes*. See Hist. Eccle-  
siast. p. 477.

tending to assert their general use or necessity. But when Justin was pressed to declare the sentiment of the church, he confessed that there were very many among the orthodox christians, who not only excluded their judaising brethren from the hope of salvation, but who declined any intercourse with them in the common offices of friendship, hospitality, and social life.<sup>a</sup> The more rigorous opinion prevailed, as it was natural to expect, over the milder; and an eternal bar of separation was fixed between the disciples of Moses and those of Christ. The unfortunate ebionites, rejected from one religion as apostates, and from the other as heretics, found themselves compelled to assume a more decided character; and although some traces of that obsolete sect may be discovered as late as the fourth century, they insensibly melted away either into the church or the synagogue.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> See the very curious dialogue of Justin Martyr with the Jew Tryphon. The conference between them was held at Ephesus, in the reign of Antoninus Pius, and about twenty years after the return of the church from Pella to Jerusalem. For this date, consult the accurate note of Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. ii, p. 511.

<sup>b</sup> Of all the systems of christianity, that of Abyssinia is the only one which still adheres to the mosaic rites (Geddes's *Church History of Ethiopia*, and *Dissertations de la Grand sur la Relation du P. Lobo*). The eunuch of queen Candace might suggest some suspicions; but as we are assured (*Socrates*, i, 19. *Sozomen*, ii, 24. *Ludolphus*, p. 281) that the *Aethiopians* were not converted till the fourth century, it is more reasonable to believe that they respected the sabbath, and distinguished the forbidden meats, in imitation of Jews, who, in a very early period, were seated on both sides of the Red sea. Circumcision had been practised by the most ancient *Aethiopians*, from motives of health and cleanliness, which seem to be explained in the *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Americains*, tom. ii, p. 117.

CHAP.  
XV.The gnos-  
ties.

While the orthodox church preserved a just medium between excessive veneration and improper contempt for the law of Moses, the various heretics deviated into equal but opposite extremes of error and extravagance. From the acknowledged truth of the Jewish religion, the ebionites had concluded that it could never be abolished. From its supposed imperfections the gnostics as hastily inferred that it never was instituted by the wisdom of the Deity. There are some objections against the authority of Moses and the prophets, which too readily present themselves to the sceptical mind; though they can only be derived from our ignorance of remote antiquity, and from our incapacity to form an adequate judgment of the divine economy. These objections were eagerly embraced, and as petulantly urged, by the vain science of the gnostics.<sup>4</sup> As those heretics were, for the most part, averse to the pleasures of sense, they morosely arraigned the polygamy of the patriarchs, the gallantries of David, and the seraglio of Solomon. The conquest of the land of Canaan, and the extirpation of the unsuspecting natives, they were at a loss how to reconcile with the common notions of humanity and justice. But when they recollect the sanguinary list of murders, of executions, and of massacres, which stain almost every page of the Jewish annals, they

<sup>4</sup> Beausobre, *Histoire du Manicheisme*, l. i. c. 3, has stated their objections, particularly those of Faustus, the adversary of Augustin, with the most learned impartiality.

acknowledged that the barbarians of Palestine CHAP.  
 had exercised as much compassion towards their XV.  
 idolatrous enemies, as they had ever shewn to  
 their friends or countrymen.<sup>a</sup> Passing from the  
 sectaries of the law to the law itself, they asserted  
 that it was impossible that a religion which con-  
 sisted only of bloody sacrifices and trifling cere-  
 monies, and whose rewards as well as punishments  
 were all of a carnal and temporal nature,  
 could inspire the love of virtue, or restrain the  
 impetuosity of passion. The mosaic account of  
 the creation and fall of man was treated with  
 profane derision by the gnostics, who would not  
 listen with patience to the repose of the Deity  
 after six days labour, to the rib of Adam, the  
 garden of Eden, the trees of life and of knowledge,  
 the speaking serpent, the forbidden fruit, and the  
 condemnation pronounced against human kind  
 for the venial offence of their first progenitors.<sup>b</sup>  
 The God of Israel was impiously represented by  
 the gnostics, as a Being liable to passion and to  
 error, capricious in his favour, implacable in his  
 resentment, meanly jealous of his superstitious  
 worship, and confining his partial providence to  
 a single people, and to this transitory life. In  
 such a character they could discover none of the  
 features of the wise and omnipotent father of the

<sup>a</sup> *Apud ipsos fides obstinata, misericordia in promptu; adversus omnes alios hostile odium.* Tacit. Hist. v, 4. Surely Tacitus had seen the Jews with too favourable an eye. The perusal of Josephus must have destroyed the antithesis.

<sup>b</sup> Dr. Burnet (*Archæologia*, 1. ii, c. 7) has discussed the first chapters of Genesis with too much wit and freedom.

CHAP. XV. universe.<sup>f</sup> They allowed that the religion of the Jews was somewhat less criminal than the idolatry of the gentiles; but it was their fundamental doctrine, that the Christ whom they adored as the first and brightest emanation of the Deity, appeared upon earth to rescue mankind from their various errors, and to reveal a *new* system of truth and perfection. The most learned of the fathers, by a very singular condescension, have imprudently admitted the sophistry of the gnostics. Acknowledging that the literal sense is repugnant to every principle of faith as well as reason, they deem themselves secure and invulnerable behind the ample veil of allegory, which they carefully spread over every tender part of the mosaic dispensation.<sup>g</sup>

Their sects, progress, and influence. It has been remarked with more ingenuity than truth, that the virgin purity of the church was never violated by schism or heresy before the reign of Trajan or Hadrian, about one hundred years after the death of Christ.<sup>h</sup> We may observe with much more propriety, that, during that period, the disciples of the messiah were indulged in a freer latitude, both of faith and practice, than has ever been allowed in succeed-

<sup>f</sup> The milder gnostics considered Jehovah, the Creator, as a being of a mixed nature between God and the devil. Others confounded him with the evil principle. Consult the second century of the general history of Mosheim, which gives a very distinct, though concise, account of their strange opinions on this subject.

<sup>g</sup> See Beausobre, Hist. du Manicheisme, l. i, c. 4. Origen and St. Augustin were among the allegorists.

<sup>h</sup> Hegesippus, ap. Euseb. l. iii, 32, iv, 22. Clemens Alexandria. Stromat. vii, 17.

ing ages. As the terms of communion were CHAP.  
insensibly narrowed, and the spiritual authority XV.  
of the prevailing party was exercised with in-  
creasing severity, many of its most respectable  
adherents, who were called upon to renounce,  
were provoked to assert, their private opinions,  
to pursue the consequences of their mistaken  
principles, and openly to erect the standard of  
rebellion against the unity of the church. The  
gnostics were distinguished as the most polite,  
the most learned, and the most wealthy, of the  
christian name ; and that general appellation,  
which expressed a superiority of knowledge, was  
either assumed by their own pride, or ironically  
bestowed by the envy of their adversaries. They  
were almost without exception of the race of the  
gentiles ; and their principal founders seem to  
have been natives of Syria or Egypt, where the  
warmth of the climate disposes both the mind  
and the body to indolent and contemplative de-  
votion. The gnostics blended with the faith of  
Christ many sublime but obscure tenets, which  
they derived from Oriental philosophy, and even  
from the religion of Zoroaster, concerning the  
eternity of matter, the existence of two prin-  
ciples, and the mysterious hierarchy of the in-  
visible world.<sup>1</sup> As soon as they launched out  
into that vast abyss, they delivered themselves to  
the guidance of a disordered imagination ; and

<sup>1</sup> In the account of the gnostics of the second and third centuries, Mosheim is ingenious and candid ; Le Clerc dull, but exact ; Beau-  
sobre almost always an apologist ; and it is much to be feared that  
the primitive fathers are very frequently calumniators.

CHAP. as the paths of error are various and infinite, the  
 XV. gnostics were imperceptibly divided into more  
 than fifty particular sects,<sup>k</sup> of whom the most  
 celebrated appear to have been the basilidians,  
 the valentinians, the marcionites, and, in a still  
 later period, the manichæans. Each of these  
 sects could boast of its bishops and congrega-  
 tions, of its doctors and martyrs;<sup>l</sup> and, instead  
 of the four gospels adopted by the church, the  
 heretics produced a multitude of histories, in  
 which the actions and discourses of Christ and  
 of his apostles were adapted to their respective  
 tenets.<sup>m</sup> The success of the gnostics was rapid  
 and extensive.<sup>n</sup> They covered Asia and Egypt,  
 established themselves in Rome, and sometimes

<sup>k</sup> See the catalogues of Irenæus and Epiphanius. It must indeed be allowed, that those writers were inclined to multiply the number of sects which opposed the *unity* of the church.

<sup>l</sup> Eusebius, l. iv, c. 15. Sozomen, l. ii, c. 32. See in Bayle, in the article of *Marcion*, a curious detail of a dispute on that subject. It should seem that some of the gnostics (the basilidians) declined, and even refused the honour of martyrdom. Their reasons were singular and obtruse. See Mosheim, p. 359.

<sup>m</sup> See a very remarkable passage of Origen (*Proem. ad Lucan.*). That indefatigable writer, who had consumed his life in the study of the scriptures, relies for their authenticity on the inspired authority of the church. It was impossible that the gnostics could receive our present gospels, many parts of which (particularly in the resurrection of Christ) are directly, and as it might seem designedly, pointed against their favourite tenets. It is therefore somewhat singular that Ignatius (*Epist. ad Smyrn. Patr. Apostol. tom. ii, p. 34*) should chuse to employ a vague and doubtful tradition, instead of quoting the certain testimony of the evangelists.

<sup>n</sup> *Faciunt savos et vespæ; faciunt ecclesias et marcionitæ*, is the strong expression of Tertullian, which I am obliged to quote from memory. In the time of Epiphanius (*advers. Hæreses*, p. 302) the marcionites were very numerous in Italy, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, and Persia.

penetrated into the provinces of the West. For CHAP. the most part they arose in the second century, flourished during the third, and were suppressed in the fourth or fifth, by the prevalence of more fashionable controversies, and by the superior ascendant of the reigning power. Though they constantly disturbed the peace, and frequently disgraced the name, of religion, they contributed to assist rather than to retard the progress of christianity. The gentile converts, whose strongest objections and prejudices were directed against the law of Moses, could find admission into many christian societies, which required not from their untutored mind any belief of an antecedent revelation. Their faith was insensibly fortified and enlarged, and the church was ultimately benefited by the conquests of its most inveterate enemies.<sup>\*</sup>

But whatever difference of opinion might sub-  
sist between the orthodox, the ebionites, and  
the gnostics, concerning the divinity or the obli-  
igation of the mosaic law, they were all equally  
animated by the same exclusive zeal, and by the  
same abhorrence for idolatry which had distin-  
guished the Jews from the other nations of the  
ancient world. The philosopher, who considered  
the system of polytheism as a composition of  
human fraud and error, could disguise a smile of  
contempt under the mask of devotion, without  
apprehending that either the mockery, or the

\* Augustin is a memorable instance of this gradual progress from reason to faith. He was, during several years, engaged in the manichean sect.

CHAP. XV. compliance, would expose him to the resentment of any invisible, or, as he conceived them, imaginary powers. But the established religions of paganism were seen by the primitive christians in a much more odious and formidable light. It was the universal sentiment both of the church and of heretics, that the dæmons were the authors, the patrons, and the objects of idolatry.<sup>p</sup> Those rebellious spirits who had been degraded from the rank of angels, and cast down into the infernal pit, were still permitted to roam upon earth, to torment the bodies, and to seduce the minds, of sinful men. The dæmons soon discovered and abused the natural propensity of the human heart towards devotion; and, artfully withdrawing the adoration of mankind from their Creator, they usurped the place and honours of the Supreme Deity. By the success of their malicious contrivances, they at once gratified their own vanity and revenge, and obtained the only comfort of which they were yet susceptible, the hope of involving the human species in the participation of their guilt and misery. It was confessed, or at least it was imagined, that they had distributed among themselves the most important characters of polytheism; one dæmon assuming the name and attributes of Jupiter, another of *Æsculapius*, a third of Venus, and a fourth perhaps of Apollo;<sup>q</sup> and that, by the

<sup>p</sup> The unanimous sentiment of the primitive church is very clearly explained by Justin. Martyr. *Apolog. Major*, by Athenagoras *Legat. c. 23*, &c. and by Lactantius, *Institut. Divin. ii*, 14-19.

<sup>q</sup> Tertullian (*Apolog. c. 29*) alleges the confession of the dæmons themselves as often as they were tormented by the christian exorcists.

advantage of their long experience and aerial nature, they were enabled to execute, with sufficient skill and dignity, the parts which they had undertaken. They lurked in the temples, instituted festivals and sacrifices, invented fables, pronounced oracles, and were frequently allowed to perform miracles. The christians, who, by the interposition of evil spirits, could so readily explain every preternatural appearance, were disposed and even desirous to admit the most extravagant fictions of the pagan mythology. But the belief of the christian was accompanied with horror. The most trifling mark of respect to the national worship he considered as a direct homage yielded to the *dæmon*, and as an act of rebellion against the majesty of God.

In consequence of this opinion, it was the first but arduous duty of a christian to preserve himself pure and undefiled by the practice of idolatry. The religion of the nations was not merely a speculative doctrine professed in the schools or preached in the temples. The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business or pleasure, of public or of private life; and it seemed impossible to escape the observance of them, without, at the same time, renouncing the commerce of mankind, and all the offices and amusements of society.<sup>1</sup> The important

Ceremo-  
nies.

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian has written a most severe treatise against idolatry, to caution his brethren against the hourly danger of incurring that guilt. *Recognita sylvam, et quante latitant spinæ. De Coronâ Militis, c. 10.*

CHAP. transactions of peace and war were prepared or  
 XV. concluded by solemn sacrifices, in which the magistrate, the senator, and the soldier, were obliged to preside or to participate.<sup>s</sup> The public spectacles were an essential part of the cheerful devotion of the pagans; and the gods were supposed to accept, as the most grateful offering, the games that the prince and people celebrated in honour of their peculiar festivals.<sup>t</sup> The christian, who with pious horror avoided the abomination of the circus or the theatre, found himself encompassed with infernal snares in every convivial entertainment, as often as his friends, invoking the hospitable deities, poured out libations to each other's happiness.<sup>u</sup> When the bride, struggling with well-affected reluctance, was forced in hymenæal pomp over the threshold of her new habitation;<sup>v</sup> or when the

<sup>s</sup> The Roman senate was always held in a temple or consecrated place (Aulus Gellius, xiv, 7). Before they entered on business, every senator dropt some wine and frankincense on the altar. Sueton. in August. c. 35.

<sup>t</sup> See Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*. This severe reformer shews no more indulgence to a tragedy of Euripides, than to a combat of gladiators. The dress of the actors particularly offends him. By the use of the lofty buskin, they impiously strive to add a cubit to their stature, c. 23.

<sup>u</sup> The ancient practice of concluding the entertainment with libations may be found in every classic. Socrates and Seneca, in their last moments, made a noble application of this custom. *Postquam stagnum calidæ aquæ introit, respergens proximos servorum, additâ voce, libare se liquorum illum Jovi Liberatori.* Tacit. *Annal.* xv, 64.

<sup>v</sup> See the elegant but idolatrous hymn of Catullus, on the nuptials of Manlius and Julian. *O Hymen, Hymenæ Iö ! Quis huic Deo comparauerit ausit ?*

sad procession of the dead slowly moved towards the funeral pile;<sup>y</sup> the christian, on these interesting occasions, was compelled to desert the persons who were the dearest to him, rather than contract the guilt inherent to those impious ceremonies. Every art and every trade that was in the least concerned in the framing or adorning of idols was polluted by the stain of idolatry;<sup>x</sup> a severe sentence, since it devoted to eternal misery the far greater part of the community, which is employed in the exercise of liberal or mechanic professions. If we cast our eyes over the numerous remains of antiquity, we shall perceive, that besides the immediate representations of the gods, and the holy instruments of their worship, the elegant forms and agreeable fictions consecrated by the imagination of the Greeks were introduced as the richest ornaments of the houses, the dress, and the furniture, of the pagans.<sup>a</sup> Even the arts of music and painting, of eloquence and poetry, flowed from the same impure origin. In the style of the fathers, Apollo and the muses were the organs of the infernal spirit, Homer and Virgil were the most

<sup>y</sup> The ancient funerals (in those of Misenus and Pallas) are no less accurately described by Virgil, than they are illustrated by his commentator Servius. The pile itself was an altar, the flames were fed with the blood of victims, and all the assistants were sprinkled with iustral water.

<sup>a</sup> Tertullian de Idololatria, c. 11.

<sup>x</sup> See every part of Monsaun's Antiquities. Even the reverses of the Greek and Roman coins were frequently of an idolatrous nature. Here indeed the scruples of the christian were suspended by a stronger passion.

CHAP. eminent of his servants, and the beautiful mythology which pervades and animates the compositions of their genius is destined to celebrate the glory of the dæmons. Even the common language of Greece and Rome abounded with familiar but impious expressions, which the imprudent christian might too carelessly utter, or too patiently hear.<sup>b</sup>

Festivals.

The dangerous temptations which on every side lurked in ambush to surprise the unguarded believer, assailed him with redoubled violence on the days of solemn festivals. So artfully were they framed and disposed throughout the year, that superstition always wore the appearance of pleasure, and often of virtue.<sup>c</sup> Some of the most sacred festivals in the Roman ritual were destined to salute the new calends of January with vows of public and private felicity; to indulge the pious remembrance of the dead and living; to ascertain the inviolable bounds of property; to hail, on the return of spring, the genial powers of fecundity; to perpetuate the two memorable eras of Rome, the foundation of the city, and that of the republic; and to restore, during the humane licence of the Saturnalia, the primitive equality of mankind. Some idea may

<sup>b</sup> Tertullian *dē Idolatria*, c. 20, 21, 22. If a Pagan friend (on the occasion perhaps of sneezing) used the familiar expression of “ Jupiter bless you,” the christian was obliged to protest against the divinity of Jupiter.

<sup>c</sup> Consult the most laboured work of Ovid, his imperfect *Fasti*. He finished no more than the first six months of the year. The compilation of Macrobius is called the *Saturnalia*, but it is only a small part of the first book that bears any relation to the title.

be conceived of the abhorrence of the christians CHAP.  
XV. for such impious ceremonies, by the scrupulous delicacy which they displayed on a much less alarming occasion. On days of general festivity, it was the custom of the ancients to adorn their doors with lamps and with branches of laurel, and to crown their heads with a garland of flowers. This innocent and elegant practice might perhaps have been tolerated as a mere civil institution. But it most unluckily happened that the doors were under the protection of the household gods, that the laurel was sacred to the lover of Daphne, and that garlands of flowers, though frequently worn as a symbol either of joy or mourning, had been dedicated in their first origin to the service of superstition. The trembling christians, who were persuaded in this instance to comply with the fashion of their country, and the commands of the magistrate, laboured under the most gloomy apprehensions, from the reproaches of their own conscience, the censures of the church, and the denunciations of divine vengeance.<sup>a</sup>

Such was the anxious diligence which was required to guard the chastity of the gospel from <sup>Zeal for  
christian-  
ity.</sup> the infectious breath of idolatry. The supersti-

<sup>a</sup> Tertullian has composed a defence, or rather panegyric, of the rash action of a christian soldier, who, by throwing away his crown of laurel, had exposed himself and his brethren to the most imminent danger. By the mention of the *emperors* (Severus and Caracalla) it is evident, notwithstanding the wishes of M. de Tillemont, that Tertullian composed his treatise *De Corona*, long before he was engaged in the errors of the montanists. See *Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. iii, p. 384.

CHAP.

XV.

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tious observances of public or private rites were carelessly practised, from education and habit, by the followers of the established religion. But as often as they occurred, they afforded the christians an opportunity of declaring and confirming their zealous opposition. By these frequent protestations their attachment to the faith was continually fortified; and in proportion to the increase of zeal, they combated with the more ardour and success in the holy war, which they had undertaken against the empire of the daemons.

THE SE-
COND
CAUSE.
The doc-
trine of the
immortal-
ity of the
soul among
the philo-
sophers;

II. The writings of Cicero^e represent in the most lively colours the ignorance, the errors, and the uncertainty, of the ancient philosophers with regard to the immortality of the soul. When they are desirous of arming their disciples against the fear of death, they inculcate, as an obvious, though melancholy position, that the fatal stroke of our dissolution releases us from the calamities of life; and that those can no longer suffer who no longer exist. Yet there were a few sages of Greece and Rome who had conceived a more exalted, and, in some respects, a juster idea of human nature; though it must be confessed, that, in the sublime inquiry, their reason had been often guided by their imagination, and that their imagination had been prompted by

* In particular, the first book of the Tusculan Questions, and the treatise de Senectute, and the Somnium Scipionis, contain, in the most beautiful language, every thing that Grecian philosophy, or Roman good sense, could possibly suggest on this dark but important object.

their vanity. When they viewed with complacency the extent of their own mental powers; when they exercised the various faculties of memory, of fancy, and of judgment, in the most profound speculations, or the most important labours; and when they reflected on the desire of fame, which transported them into future ages, far beyond the bounds of death and of the grave; they were unwilling to confound themselves with the beasts of the field, or to suppose, that a being, for whose dignity they entertained the most sincere admiration, could be limited to a spot of earth, and to a few years of duration. With this favourable prepossession they summoned to their aid the science, or rather the language, of metaphysics. They soon discovered, that as none of the properties of matter will apply to the operations of the mind, the human soul must consequently be a substance distinct from the body, pure, simple, and spiritual, incapable of dissolution, and susceptible of a much higher degree of virtue and happiness after the release from its corporeal prison. From these specious and noble principles, the philosophers who trod in the footsteps of Plato deduced a very unjustifiable conclusion, since they asserted, not only the future immortality, but the past eternity of the human soul, which they were too apt to consider as a portion of the infinite and self-existing spirit, which pervades and sustains the universe.^f

^f The pre-existence of human souls, so far at least as that doctrine is compatible with religion, was adopted by many of the Greek and Latin fathers. See Beausobre, Hist. du Manicheisme, l. vi, c. 4.

CHAP. XV. A doctrine thus removed beyond the senses and the experience of mankind might serve to amuse the leisure of a philosophic mind; or, in the silence of solitude, it might sometimes impart a ray of comfort to desponding virtue; but the faint impression which had been received in the school, was soon obliterated by the commerce and business of active life. We are sufficiently acquainted with the eminent persons who flourished in the age of Cicero, and of the first Cæsars, with their actions, their characters, and their motives, to be assured that their conduct in this life was never regulated by any serious conviction of the rewards or punishments of a future state. At the bar and in the senate of Rome the ablest orators were not apprehensive of giving offence to their hearers, by exposing that doctrine as an idle and extravagant opinion, which was rejected with contempt by every man of a liberal education and understanding.⁶

among the pagans of Greece and Rome,

Since therefore the most sublime efforts of philosophy can extend no farther than feebly to point out the desire, the hope, or, at most, the probability, of a future state, there is nothing except a divine revelation that can ascertain the existence, and describe the condition, of the invisible country which is destined to receive the souls of men after their separation from the body.

⁶ See Cicero pro Cœlent. c. 61. Cæsar ap. Sallust. de Bell. Catilin. c. 50. Juvenal. Satir. ii, 149.

Esse aliquos manes, et subterranea regna,

Nec pueri credunt, nisi qui nondum aera lavantur.

But we may perceive several defects inherent to the popular religions of Greece and Rome, which rendered them very unequal to so arduous a task.

1. The general system of their mythology was unsupported by any solid proofs ; and the wisest among the pagans had already disclaimed its usurped authority. 2. The description of the infernal regions had been abandoned to the fancy of painters and of poets, who peopled them with so many phantoms and monsters, who dispensed their rewards and punishments with so little equity, that a solemn truth, the most congenial to the human heart, was oppressed and disgraced by the absurd mixture of the wildest fictions.¹ 3. The doctrine of a future state was scarcely considered among the devout polytheists of Greece and Rome as a fundamental article of faith. The providence of the gods, as it related to public communities rather than to private individuals, was principally displayed on the visible theatre of the present world. The petitions which were offered on the altars of Jupiter or Apollo expressed the anxiety of their worshippers for temporal happiness, and their ignorance or indifference concerning a future life.² The

¹ The eleventh book of the *Odyssey* gives a very dreary and incoherent account of the infernal shades. Pindar and Virgil have embellished the picture ; but even those poets, though more correct than their great model, are guilty of very strange inconsistencies. See Bayle, *Responses aux Questions d'un Provincial*, part iii, c. 22.

² See the sixteenth epistle of the first book of Horace, the thirteenth satire of Juvenal, and the second satire of Persius : these popular discourses express the sentiment and language of the multitude.

CHAP.
XV.among the
barbari-
ans;

important truth of the immortality of the soul was inculcated with more diligence as well as success in India, in Assyria, in Egypt, and in Gaul; and since we cannot attribute such a difference to the superior knowledge of the barbarians, we must ascribe it to the influence of an established priesthood, which employed the motives of virtue as the instrument of ambition.^k

among the
Jews;

We might naturally expect, that a principle so essential to religion would have been revealed in the clearest terms to the chosen people of Palestine, and that it might safely have been intrusted to the hereditary priesthood of Aaron. It is incumbent on us to adore the mysterious dispensations of Providence,^l when we discover, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is omitted in the law of Moses; it is darkly insinuated by the prophets, and during the long period which elapsed between the Egyptian and the Babylonian servitudes, the hopes as well as fears of the Jews appear to have been confined

^k If we confine ourselves to the Gauls, we may observe, that they intrusted, not only their lives, but even their money, to the security of another world. *Vetus ille mos Gallorum occurrit* (says Valerius Maximus, l. ii, c. 6, p. 10) *quos memoria proditur est, pecunias mutuas, quæ his apud inferos redderentur, dare solitos.* The same custom is more darkly insinuated by Mela, l. iii, c. 2. It is almost needless to add, that the profits of trade hold a just proportion of the credit of the merchant, and that the druids derived from their holy profession a character of responsibility, which could scarcely be claimed by any other order of men.

^l The right reverend author of the *Divine Legation of Moses* assigns a very curious reason for the omission, and most ingeniously resorts it on the unbelievers.

within the narrow compass of the present life.^m After Cyrus had permitted the exiled nation to return into the promised land, and after Ezra had restored the ancient records of their religion, two celebrated sects, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, insensibly arose at Jerusalem.ⁿ The former, selected from the more opulent and distinguished ranks of society, were strictly attached to the literal sense of the mosaic law, and they piously rejected the immortality of the soul, as an opinion that received no countenance from the divine book, which they revered as the only rule of their faith. To the authority of scripture the Pharisees added that of tradition, and they accepted, under the name of traditions, several speculative tenets from the philosophy or religion of the eastern nations. The doctrines of fate or predestination, of angels and spirits, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, were in the number of these new articles of belief; and as the Pharisees, by the austerity of their manners, had drawn into their party the body of the Jewish people, the immortality of the soul became the prevailing sentiment of the synagogue, under the reign of the Asmonæan princes

^m See Le Clerc (*Prolegomena ad Hist. Ecclesiast. sect. i. c. 8*). His authority seems to carry the greater weight, as he has written a learned and judicious commentary on the books of the Old Testament.

ⁿ Joseph. *Antiquitat. I. xiii. c. 10. De Bell. Jud. ii. 8.* According to the most natural interpretation of his words, the Sadducees admitted only the Pentateuch; but it has pleased some modern critics to add the prophets to their creed, and to suppose, that they contented themselves with rejecting the traditions of the Pharisees. Dr. Jortin has argued that point in his *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History* vol. ii, p. 103.

CHAP. and pontiffs. The temper of the Jews was incapable of contenting itself with such a cold and languid assent as might satisfy the mind of a polytheist; and as soon as they admitted the idea of a future state, they embraced it with the zeal which has always formed the characteristic of the nation. Their zeal, however, added nothing to its evidence, or even probability; and it was still necessary, that the doctrine of life and immortality, which had been dictated by nature, approved by reason, and received by superstition, should obtain the sanction of divine truth from the authority and example of Christ.

among the christians.

When the promise of eternal happiness was proposed to mankind, on condition of adopting the faith, and of observing the precepts, of the gospel, it is no wonder that so advantageous an offer should have been accepted by great numbers of every religion, of every rank, and of every province in the Roman empire. The ancient christians were animated by a contempt for their present existence, and by a just confidence of immortality, of which the doubtful and imperfect faith of modern ages cannot give us any adequate notion.

Approach-
ing end of
the world.

In the primitive church, the influence of truth was very powerfully strengthened by an opinion, which, however it may deserve respect for its usefulness and antiquity, has not been found agreeable to experience. It was universally believed, that the end of the world, and the kingdom of heaven, were at hand. The near approach of this wonderful event had been predicted by the apostles; the tradition of

it was preserved by their earliest disciples ; and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ himself, were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the son of man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished, which had beheld his humble condition upon earth, and which might still be witness of the calamities of the Jews under Vespasian or Hadrian. The revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us not to press too closely the mysterious language of prophecy and revelation ; but as long as, for wise purposes, this error was permitted to subsist in the church, it was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of christians, who lived in the awful expectation of that moment when the globe itself, and all the various race of mankind, should tremble at the appearance of their divine judge.

The ancient and popular doctrine of the millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in six days, their duration in their present state, according to a tradition which was attributed to the prophet Elijah, was fixed to six thousand years.^p By the

* This expectation was countenanced by the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, and by the first epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. Erasmus removes the difficulty by the help of allegory and metaphor ; and the learned Grotius ventures to insinuate, that for wise purposes the pious deception was permitted to take place.

^p See Burnet's Sacred Theory, part iii, c. 5. This tradition may be traced as high as the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, who wrote in the first century, and who seems to have been half a Jew.



CHAP. same analogy it was inferred, that this long period of labour and contention, which was now almost elapsed,⁴ would be succeeded by a joyful sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection. So pleasing was this hope to the mind of believers, that the *New Jerusalem*, the seat of this blissful kingdom, was quickly adorned with all the gayest colours of the imagination. A felicity consisting only of pure and spiritual pleasure would have appeared too refined for its inhabitants, who were still supposed to possess their human nature and senses. A garden of Eden, with the amusements of the pastoral life, was no longer suited to the advanced state of society which prevailed under the Roman empire. A city was therefore erected of gold and precious stones, and a supernatural plenty of corn and wine was bestowed on the adjacent territory; in the free enjoyment of whose spontaneous productions, the happy and benevolent

⁴ The primitive church of Antioch computed almost 6000 years from the creation of the world to the birth of Christ. Africanus, Lactantius, and the Greek church, have reduced that number to 5500, and Eusebius has contented himself with 5200 years. These calculations were formed on the Septuagint, which was universally received during the six first centuries. The authority of the Vulgate and of the Hebrew text has determined the moderns, protestants as well as catholics, to prefer a period of about 4000 years; though, in the study of profane antiquity, they often find themselves straitened by those narrow limits.

people was never to be restrained by any jealous laws of exclusive property.^r The assurance of such a millenium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr^s and Irenæus, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles, down to Lactantius, who was preceptor to the son of Constantine.^t Though it might not be universally received, it appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers; and it seems so well adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind, that it must have contributed in a very considerable degree to the progress of the christian faith. But when the edifice of the church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fan-

^r Most of these pictures were borrowed from a misinterpretation of Isaiah, Daniel, and the Apocalypse. One of the grossest images may be found in Irenæus (l. v, p. 455) the disciple of Papias, who had seen the apostle St. John.

^s See the second dialogue of Justin with Tryphon, and the seventh book of Lactantius. It is unnecessary to allege all the intermediate fathers, as the fact is not disputed. Yet the curious reader may consult Daillé de usu Patrum, l. ii, c. 4.

^t The testimony of Justin, of his own faith and that of his orthodox brethren, in the doctrine of a millenium, is delivered in the clearest and most solemn manner (Dialog. cum Tryphonate Jud. p. 177, 178. Edit. Benedictin.). If in the beginning of this important passage there is any thing like an inconsistency, we may impute it, as we think proper, either to the author or to his transcribers.

CHAP. ticism.^u A mysterious prophecy, which still
 XV. forms a part of the sacred canon, which was
 thought to favour the exploded sentiment, has
 very narrowly escaped the proscription of the
 church.^x

Conflagra-
 tion of
 Rome and
 of the
 world.

Whilst the happiness and glory of a temporal
 reign were promised to the disciples of Christ,
 the most dreadful calamities were denounced
 against an unbelieving world. The edification
 of the new Jerusalem was to advance by equal
 steps with the destruction of the mystic Babylon;
 and as long as the emperors who reigned before
 Constantine persisted in the profession of idolatry,
 the epithet of Babylon was applied to the city
 and to the empire of Rome. A regular series

^u Dupin, *Bibliothéque Ecclesiastique*, tom. i, p. 223, tom. ii, p. 366, and Mosheim, p. 720; though the latter of these learned divines is not altogether candid on this occasion.

^x In the council of Laodicea (about the year 360), the Apocalypse was tacitly excluded from the sacred canon, by the same churches of Asia to which it is addressed; and we may learn from the complaint of Sulpicius Severus, that their sentence had been ratified by the greater number of christians of his time. From what causes then is the Apocalypse at present so generally received by the Greek, the Roman, and the protestant churches? The following ones may be assigned. 1. The Greeks were subdued by the authority of an impostor, who, in the sixth century, assumed the character of Dionysius the Areopagite. 2. A just apprehension, that the grammarians might become more important than the theologians, engaged the council of Trent to fix the seal of their infallibility on all the books of scripture contained in the Latin Vulgate, in the number of which the Apocalypse was fortunately included. (Fr. Paolo, *Istorio del Concilio Tridentino*, l. ii). 3. The advantage of turning those mysterious prophecies against the see of Rome inspired the protestants with uncommon veneration for so useful an ally. See the ingenious and elegant discourses of the present bishop of Litchfield on that un promising subject.

was prepared of all the moral and physical evils which can afflict a flourishing nation; intestine discord, and the invasion of the fiercest barbarians from the unknown regions of the north; pestilence and famine, comets and eclipses, earthquakes and inundations.^r All these were only so many preparatory and alarming signs of the great catastrophe of Rome, when the country of the Scipios and Cæsars should be consumed by a flame from heaven, and the city of the seven hills, with her palaces, her temples, and her triumphal arches, should be buried in a vast lake of fire and brimstone. It might, however, afford some consolation to Roman vanity, that the period of their empire would be that of the world itself; which, as it had once perished by the element of water, was destined to experience a second and speedy destruction from the element of fire. In the opinion of a general conflagration, the faith of the christian very happily coincided with the tradition of the east, and the philosophy of the stoics, and the analogy of nature; and even the country, which, from religious motives, had been chosen for the origin and principal scene of the conflagration, was the best adapted for that purpose by natural and physical causes; by its deep caverns, beds of sulphur, and numerous volcanoes, of which those of Ætna, of Vesuvius, and of Lipari, exhibit a very imperfect representation. The calmest and most

^r Lactantius (*Institut. Divin.* vii, 15, &c.) relates the dismal tale of futurity with great spirit and eloquence.

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XV.

intrepid sceptic could not refuse to acknowledge, that the destruction of the present system of the world by fire was in itself extremely probable. The christian, who founded his belief much less on the fallacious arguments of reason than on the authority of tradition and the interpretation of scripture, expected it with terror and confidence as a certain and approaching event; and as his mind was perpetually filled with the solemn idea, he considered every disaster that happened to the empire as an infallible symptom of an expiring world.²

The pagans
devoted to
eternal pu-
nishment.

The condemnation of the wisest and most virtuous of the pagans, on account of their ignorance or disbelief of the divine truth, seems to offend the reason and the humanity of the present age.³ But the primitive church, whose faith was of a much firmer consistence, delivered over, without hesitation, to eternal torture, the far greater part of the human species. A cha-

² On this subject, every reader of taste will be entertained with the third part of Burnet's *Sacred Theory*. He blends philosophy, scripture, and tradition, into one magnificent system; in the description of which he displays a strength of fancy not inferior to that of Milton himself.

³ And yet, whatever may be the language of individuals, it is still the public doctrine of all the christian churches; nor can even our own refuse to admit the conclusions which must be drawn from the eighth and the eighteenth of her articles. The jansenites, who have so diligently studied the works of the fathers, maintain this sentiment with distinguished zeal; and the learned M. de Tillemont never dismisses a virtuous emperor without pronouncing his damnation. Zuinglius is perhaps the only leader of a party who has ever adopted the milder sentiment; and he gave no less offence to the lutherans than to the catholics. See Bossuet, *Histoire des Variations des Eglises Protestantes*, I. ii, c. 19-22.

ritable hope might perhaps be indulged in favour of Socrates, or some other sages of antiquity, who had consulted the light of reason before that of the gospel had arisen.^b But it was unanimously affirmed, that those who, since the birth or the death of Christ, had obstinately persisted in the worship of the daemons, neither deserved nor could expect a pardon from the irritated justice of the Deity. These rigid sentiments, which had been unknown to the ancient world, appear to have infused a spirit of bitterness into a system of love and harmony. The ties of blood and friendship were frequently torn asunder by the difference of religious faith; and the christians, who in this world found themselves oppressed by the power of the pagans, were sometimes seduced by resentment and spiritual pride to delight in the prospect of their future triumph.

“ You are fond of spectacles,” exclaims the stern Tertullian, “ expect the greatest of all spectacles, the last and eternal judgment of the universe. How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs, and fancied gods, groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer fires than they ever kindled against the christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in red hot flames

^b Justin and Clemens of Alexandria allow that some of the philosophers were instructed by the Logos; confounding its double signification, of the human reason, and of the Divine word.

CHAP. " with their deluded scholars; so many celebrated poets trembling before the tribunal, " not of Minos, but of Christ; so many tragedians, more tuneful in the expression of their " own sufferings; so many dancers—!" But the humanity of the reader will permit me to draw a veil over the rest of this infernal description, which the zealous African pursues in a long variety of affected and unfeeling witticisms.^c

Were often converted by their fears.

Doubtless there were many among the primitive christians of a temper more suitable to the meekness and charity of their profession. There were many who felt a sincere compassion for the danger of their friends and countrymen, and who exerted the most benevolent zeal to save them from the impending destruction. The careless polytheist, assailed by new and unexpected terrors, against which neither his priests nor his philosophers could afford him any certain protection, was very frequently terrified and subdued by the menace of eternal tortures. His fears might assist the progress of his faith and reason; and if he could once persuade himself to suspect that the christian religion might possibly be true, it became an easy task to convince him

* Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, c. 30. In order to ascertain the degree of authority which the zealous African had acquired, it may be sufficient to allege the testimony of Cyprian, the doctor and guide of all the western churches. (See Prudent. *Hym. xiii*, 100). As often as he applied himself to his daily study of the writings of Tertullian, he was accustomed to say, " *Da mihi magistrum*; Give me my master." (Hieronym. *de Viris Illustribus*, tom. i, p. 284).

that it was the safest and most prudent party that he could possibly embrace. CHAP. XV.

III. The supernatural gifts, which even in this THE THIRD CAUSE. life were ascribed to the christians above the rest of mankind, must have conduced to their own comfort, and very frequently to the conviction of infidels. Besides the occasional prodigies, which might sometimes be effected by the immediate interposition of the Deity, when he suspended the laws of nature for the service of religion, the christian church, from the time of the apostles and their first disciples,^a has claimed an uninterrupted succession of miraculous powers, the gift of tongues, of vision, and of prophecy, the power of expelling daemons, of healing the sick, and of raising the dead. The knowledge of foreign languages was frequently communicated to the contemporaries of Irenæus, though Irenæus himself was left to struggle with the difficulties of a barbarous dialect whilst he preached the gospel to the natives of Gaul.^c The divine inspiration, whether it was conveyed in the form of a waking or of a sleeping vision, is described as a favour very liberally bestowed on all ranks of the faithful, on women as on elders, on boys as well as upon bishops. When

^a Notwithstanding the evasions of Dr. Middleton, it is impossible to overlook the clear traces of visions and inspiration, which may be found in the apostolic fathers.

^c Irenæus *adv. Hæres.* *Proem.* p. 3. Dr. Middleton (*Free Inquiry*, p. 96, &c.) observes, that as this pretension of all others was the most difficult to support by art, it was the soonest given up. The observation suits his hypothesis.

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their devout minds were sufficiently prepared by a course of prayer, of fasting, and of vigils, to receive the extraordinary impulse, they were transported out of their senses, and delivered in ecstasy what was inspired, being mere organs of the holy spirit, just as a pipe or flute is of him who blows into it.^f We may add, that the design of these visions was, for the most part, either to disclose the future history, or to guide the present administration, of the church. The expulsion of the dæmons from the bodies of those unhappy persons whom they had been permitted to torment was considered as a signal though ordinary triumph of religion, and is repeatedly alleged by the ancient apologists, as the most convincing evidence of the truth of christianity. The awful ceremony was usually performed in a public manner, and in the presence of a great number of spectators; the patient was relieved by the power or skill of the exorcist; and the vanquished dæmon was heard to confess, that he was one of the fabled gods of antiquity, who had impiously usurped the adoration of mankind.^g But the miraculous cure of diseases of the most inveterate or even preternatural kind can no longer occasion any surprise, when we recollect,

^f Athenagoras in Legatione. Justin Martyr, Cohort. ad Gentes. Tertullian advers. Martionit. l. iv. These descriptions are not very unlike the prophetic fury, for which Cicero (de Divinat. ii, 54) expresses so little reverence.

^g Tertullian (Apolog. c. 23) throws out a bold defiance to the pagan magistrates. Of the primitive miracles, the power of exorcising is the only one which has been assumed by the protestants.

that in the days of Irenæus, about the end of the second century, the resurrection of the dead was very far from being esteemed an uncommon event; that the miracle was frequently performed on necessary occasions, by great fasting and the joint supplication of the church of the place; and that the persons thus restored to their prayers had lived afterwards among them many years.^h At such a period, when faith could boast of so many wonderful victories over death, it seems difficult to account for the scepticism of those philosophers who still rejected and derided the doctrine of the resurrection. A noble Grecian had rested on this important ground the whole controversy, and promised Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, that if he could be gratified with the sight of a single person who had been actually raised from the dead, he would immediately embrace the christian religion. It is somewhat remarkable, that the prelate of the first Eastern church, however anxious for the conversion of his friend, thought proper to decline this fair and reasonable challenge.ⁱ

The miracles of the primitive church, after obtaining the sanction of ages, have been lately attacked in a very free and ingenious inquiry,^k Their truth contested.

^h Irenæus adv. Hæres, I. ii, 56, 57, I. v, c. 6. Mr. Dodwell (Dissertat. ad Irenæum, ii, 42) concludes, that the second century was still more fertile in miracles than the first.

ⁱ Theophilus ad Autolycum, I. i, p. 345, edit. Benedictin. Paris, 1742.

^k Dr. Middleton sent out his Introduction in the year 1747, published his Free Inquiry in 1749, and before his death, which happened in 1750, he had prepared a vindication of it against his numerous adversaries.

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which, though it has met with the most favourable reception from the public, appears to have excited a general scandal among the divines of our own as well as of the other protestant churches of Europe.¹ Our different sentiments on this subject will be much less influenced by any particular arguments, than by our habits of study and reflection; and, above all, by the degree of the evidence which we have accustomed ourselves to require for the proof of a miraculous event.

Our perplexity in defining the miraculous period.

The duty of an historian does not call upon him to interpose his private judgment in this nice and important controversy; but he ought not to dissemble the difficulty of adopting such a theory as may reconcile the interest of religion with that of reason, of making a proper application of that theory, and of defining with precision the limits of that happy period exempt from error and from deceit, to which we might be disposed to extend the gift of supernatural powers. From the first of the fathers to the last of the popes, a succession of bishops, of saints, of martyrs, and of miracles, is continued without interruption; and the progress of superstition was so gradual and almost imperceptible, that we know not in what particular link we should break the chain of tradition. Every age bears testimony to the wonderful events by which it was distinguished; and its testimony appears no less weighty and respectable

¹ The university of Oxford conferred degrees on his opponents. From the indignation of Mosheim (p. 221), we may discover the sentiments of the lutheran divines.

than that of the preceding generation, till we are CHAP.
insensibly led on to accuse our own inconsistency, XV.
if in the eighth or in the twelfth century we
deny to the venerable Bede, or to the holy Ber-
nard, the same degree of confidence which, in the
second century, we had so liberally granted to
Justin or to Irenæus.^m If the truth of any of
those miracles is appreciated by their apparent
use and propriety, every age had unbelievers to
convince, heretics to confute, and idolatrous na-
tions to convert; and sufficient motives might al-
ways be produced to justify the interposition of
Heaven. And yet since every friend to revela-
tion is persuaded of the reality, and every reason-
able man is convinced of the cessation, of mira-
culous powers, it is evident that there must have
been *some period* in which they were either sud-
denly or gradually withdrawn from the christian
church. Whatever era is chosen for that pur-
pose, the death of the apostles, the conversion of
the Roman empire, or the extinction of the ari-
an heresy,ⁿ the insensibility of the christians who
lived at that time will equally afford a just
matter of surprise. They still supported their
pretensions after they had lost their power.

^m It may seem somewhat remarkable, that Bernard of Clairvaux, who records so many miracles of his friend St. Malachi, never takes any notice of his own, which, in their turn, however, are carefully related by his companions and disciples. In the long series of ecclesiastical history, does there exist a single instance of a saint asserting that he himself possessed the gift of miracles?

ⁿ The conversion of Constantine is the era which is most usually fixed by protestants. The more rational divines are unwilling to admit the miracles of the fourth, whilst the more credulous are unwilling to reject those of the fifth, century.

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Credulity performed the office of faith; fanaticism was permitted to assume the language of inspiration; and the effects of accident or contrivance were ascribed to supernatural causes. The recent experience of genuine miracles should have instructed the christian world in the ways of Providence, and habituated their eye (if we may use a very inadequate expression) to the style of the divine artist. Should the most skilful painter of modern Italy presume to decorate his feeble imitations with the name of Raphael or of Correggio, the insolent fraud would be soon discovered and indignantly rejected.

Use of the
primitive
miracles.

Whatever opinion may be entertained of the miracles of the primitive church since the time of the apostles, this unresisting softness of temper, so conspicuous among the believers of the second and third centuries, proved of some accidental benefit to the cause of truth and religion. In modern times, a latent and even involuntary scepticism adheres to the most pious dispositions. Their admission of supernatural truths is much less an active consent, than a cold and passive acquiescence. Accustomed long since to observe and to respect the invariable order of nature, our reason, or at least our imagination, is not sufficiently prepared to sustain the visible action of the Deity. But, in the first ages of christianity, the situation of mankind was extremely different. The most curious, or the most credulous, among the pagans were often persuaded to enter into a society, which asserted an actual claim of miraculous powers. The primitive

christians perpetually trode on mystic ground, and their minds were exercised by the habits of believing the most extraordinary events. They felt, or they fancied, that on every side they were incessantly assaulted by daemons, comforted by visions, instructed by prophecy, and surprisingly delivered from danger, sickness, and from death itself, by the supplications of the church. The real or imaginary prodigies, of which they so frequently conceived themselves to be the objects, the instruments, or the spectators, very happily disposed them to adopt with the same ease, but with far greater justice, the authentic wonders of the evangelic history; and thus miracles that exceeded not the measure of their own experience inspired them with the most lively assurance of mysteries which were acknowledged to surpass the limits of their understanding. It is this deep impression of supernatural truths which has been so much celebrated under the name of faith; a state of mind described as the surest pledge of the divine favour and of future felicity, and recommended as the first or perhaps the only merit of a christian. According to the more rigid doctors, the moral virtues, which may be equally practised by infidels, are destitute of any value or efficacy in the work of our justification.

iv. But the primitive christian demonstrated his faith by his virtues; and it was very justly supposed that the divine persuasion which enlightened or subdued the understanding must, at the same time, purify the heart and direct the

THE
FOURTH
CAUSE.
Virtues of
the first
christians.

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actions of the believer. The first apologists of christianity who justify the innocence of their brethren, and the writers of a later period who celebrate the sanctity of their ancestors, display, in the most lively colours, the reformation of manners which was introduced into the world by the preaching of the gospel. As it is my intention to remark only such human causes as were permitted to second the influence of revelation, I shall slightly mention two motives which might naturally render the lives of the primitive christians much purer and more austere than those of their pagan contemporaries, or their degenerate successors; repentance for their past sins, and the laudable desire of supporting the reputation of the society in which they were engaged.

Effects of
their re-
pentance.

It is a very ancient reproach, suggested by the ignorance or the malice of infidelity, that the christians allured into their party the most atrocious criminals, who, as soon as they were touched by a sense of remorse, were easily persuaded to wash away, in the water of baptism, the guilt of their past conduct, for which the temples of the gods refused to grant them any expiation. But this reproach, when it is cleared from misrepresentation, contributes as much to the honour as it did to the increase of the church. The friends of christianity may acknowledge without a blush, that many of the most eminent

* The imputations of Celsus and Julian, with the defence of the fathers, are very fairly stated by Spanheim, *Commentaire sur les Césars de Julian*, p. 468.

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.....

saints had been before their baptism the most abandoned sinners. Those persons, who in the world had followed, though in an imperfect manner, the dictates of benevolence and propriety, derived such a calm satisfaction from the opinion of their own rectitude, as rendered them much less susceptible of the sudden emotions of shame, of grief, and of terror, which have given birth to so many wonderful conversions. After the example of their divine master, the missionaries of the gospel disdained not the society of men, and especially of women, oppressed by the consciousness, and very often by the effects, of their vices. As they emerged from sin and superstition to the glorious hope of immortality, they resolved to devote themselves to a life, not only of virtue, but of penitence. The desire of perfection became the ruling passion of their soul; and it is well known, that while reason embraces a cold mediocrity, our passions hurry us, with rapid violence, over the space which lies between the most opposite extremes.

When the new converts had been enrolled in the number of the faithful, and were admitted to the sacraments of the church, they found themselves restrained from relapsing into their past disorders by another consideration, of a less spiritual, but of a very innocent and respectable nature. Any particular society that has departed from the great body of the nation, or the religion to which it belonged, immediately becomes the object of universal as well as invidious observation. In proportion to the smallness of its num-
Care of
their reputa-
tion.

CHAP. bers, the character of the society may be affected
XV. by the virtue and vices of the persons who
compose it; and every member is engaged to
watch with the most vigilant attention over his
own behaviour, and over that of his brethren,
since, as he must expect to incur a part of the
common disgrace, he may hope to enjoy a share
of the common reputation. When the christians
of Bithynia were brought before the tribunal of
the younger Pliny, they assured the proconsul,
that, far from being engaged in any unlawful
conspiracy, they were bound by a solemn obliga-
tion to abstain from the commission of those
crimes which disturb the private or public peace
of society; from theft, robbery, adultery, per-
jury, and fraud.^p Near a century afterwards,
Tertullian, with an honest pride, could boast,
that very few christians had suffered by the hand
of the executioner, except on account of their
religion.^q Their serious and sequestered life,
averse to the gay luxury of the age, inured them
to chastity, temperance, economy, and all the
sober and domestic virtues. As the greater
number were of some trade or profession, it was
incumbent on them, by the strictest integrity
and the fairest dealing, to remove the suspicions
which the profane are too apt to conceive against
the appearances of sanctity. The contempt of
the world exercised them in the habits of humili-

^p Plin. Epist. x, 97.

^q Tertullian, Apolog. c. 44. He adds, however, with some de-
gree of hesitation, "Aut si aliquid, jam non Christianus."

lity, meekness, and patience. The more they were persecuted, the more closely they adhered to each other. Their mutual charity and unsuspecting confidence has been remarked by infidels, and was too often abused by perfidious friends.^r

It is a very honourable circumstance for the ^{Morality} _{of the fa-} ^{thers.} morals of the primitive christians, that even

their faults, or rather errors, were derived from an excess of virtue. The bishops and doctors of the church, whose evidence attests, and whose authority might influence, the professions, the principles, and even the practice, of their contemporaries, had studied the scriptures with less skill than devotion; and they often received, in the most literal sense, those rigid precepts of Christ and the apostles, to which the prudence of succeeding commentators has applied a loose and more figurative mode of interpretation. Ambitious to exalt the perfection of the gospel above the wisdom of philosophy, the zealous fathers have carried the duties of self-mortification, of purity, and of patience, to a height which it is scarcely possible to attain, and much less to preserve, in our present state of weakness and corruption. A doctrine so extraordinary and so sublime must inevitably command the veneration of the people; but it was ill calculated to obtain the suffrage of those worldly philosophers, who, in the conduct of this transitory life, con-

^r The philosopher Peregrinus (of whose life and death Lucian has left us so entertaining an account) imposed, for a long time, on the credulous simplicity of the christians of Asia.

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Principles
of human
nature.

There are two very natural propensities which we may distinguish in the most virtuous and liberal dispositions, the love of pleasure and the love of action. If the former be refined by art and learning, improved by the charms of social intercourse, and corrected by a just regard to economy, to health, and to reputation, it is productive of the greatest part of the happiness of private life. The love of action is a principle of a much stronger and more doubtful nature. It often leads to anger, to ambition, and to revenge; but when it is guided by the sense of propriety and benevolence, it becomes the parent of every virtue; and if those virtues are accompanied with equal abilities, a family, a state, or an empire, may be indebted for their safety and prosperity to the undaunted courage of a single man. To the love of pleasure we may therefore ascribe most of the agreeable, to the love of action we may attribute most of the useful and respectable, qualifications. The character in which both the one and the other should be united and harmonised would seem to constitute the most perfect idea of human nature. The insensible and inactive disposition, which should be supposed alike destitute of both, would be rejected, by the common consent of mankind, as utterly incapable of procuring any happiness

* See a very judicious treatise of Barbeyrac sur la Morale des Peres.

to the individual, or any public benefit to the world. But it was not in *this* world that the primitive christians were desirous of making themselves either agreeable or useful.

The acquisition of knowledge, the exercise of our reason or fancy, and the cheerful flow of unguarded conversation, may employ the leisure of a liberal mind. Such amusements, however, were rejected with abhorrence, or admitted with the utmost caution, by the severity of the fathers, who despised all knowledge that was not useful to salvation, and who considered all levity of discourse as a criminal abuse of the gift of speech. In our present state of existence the body is so inseparably connected with the soul, that it seems to be our interest to taste, with innocence and moderation, the enjoyments of which that faithful companion is susceptible. Very different was the reasoning of our devout predecessors; vainly aspiring to imitate the perfection of angels, they disdained, or they affected to disdain, every earthly and corporeal delight.^t Some of our senses indeed are necessary for our preservation, others for our subsistence, and others again for our information, and thus far it was impossible to reject the use of them. The first sensation of pleasure was marked as the first moment of their abuse. The unfeeling candidate for heaven was instructed, not only to resist the grosser allurements of the taste or smell, but even to shut his ears against the pro-

The primitive christians condemn pleasure and luxury.

^t Lactant. Institut. Divin. I. vi, c. 20, 21, 22.

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fane harmony of sounds, and to view with indifference the most finished productions of human art. Gay apparel, magnificent houses, and elegant furniture, were supposed to unite the double guilt of pride and of sensuality: a simple and mortified appearance was more suitable to the christian who was certain of his sins, and doubtful of his salvation. In their censures of luxury, the fathers are extremely minute and circumstantial;^u and among the various articles which excite their pious indignation, we may enumerate false hair, garments of any colour except white, instruments of music, vases of gold or silver, downy pillows (as Jacob reposed his head on a stone), white bread, foreign wines, public salutations, the use of warm baths, and the practice of shaving the beard, which, according to the expression of Tertullian, is a lie against our own faces, and an impious attempt to improve the works of the Creator.^x When christianity was introduced among the rich and the polite, the observation of these singular laws was left, as it would be at present, to the few who were ambitious of superior sanctity. But it is always easy, as well as agreeable, for the inferior ranks of mankind to claim a merit from the contempt of that pomp and pleasure, which fortune has placed beyond their reach. The virtue of the

^u Consult a work of Clemens of Alexandria, intitled the *Pædagogue*, which contains the rudiments of ethics as they were taught in the most celebrated of the christian schools.

^x Tertullian, *de Spectaculis*, c. 23. Clemens Alexandrin. *Pædagog.* I. iii, c. 8.

primitive christians, like that of the first Romans, CHAP.
was very frequently guarded by poverty and ignorance. XV.

The chaste severity of the fathers, in whatever related to the commerce of the two sexes, flowed from the same principle; their abhorrence of every enjoyment which might gratify the sensual, and degrade the spiritual, nature of man. It was their favourite opinion, that if Adam had preserved his obedience to the Creator, he would have lived for ever in a state of virgin purity, and that some harmless mode of vegetation might have peopled paradise with a race of innocent and immortal beings.³ The use of marriage was permitted only to his fallen posterity, as a necessary expedient to continue the human species, and as a restraint, however imperfect, on the natural licentiousness of desire. The hesitation of the orthodox casuists on this interesting subject betrays the perplexity of men, unwilling to approve an institution, which they were compelled to tolerate.⁴ The enumeration of the very whimsical laws, which they most circumstantially imposed on the marriage bed, would force a smile from the young, and a blush from the fair. It was their unanimous sentiment, that a first marriage was adequate to all the purposes of nature and of society. The sensual connexion was refined into a resemblance of the mystic

Their sentiments concerning marriage and chaste-
ness.

³ Beausobre, *Hist. Critique du Manicheisme*, l. vii, c. 3. Justin, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustin, &c. strongly inclined to this opinion.

⁴ Some of the gnostic heretics were more consistent; they rejected the use of marriage.

CHAP. union of Christ with his church, and was pronounced to be indissoluble either by divorce or by death. The practice of second nuptials was branded with the name of a legal adultery; and the persons who were guilty of so scandalous an offence against christian purity were soon excluded from the honours, and even from the alms, of the church.^a Since desire was imputed as a crime, and marriage was tolerated as a defect, it was consistent with the same principles to consider a state of celibacy as the nearest approach to the divine perfection. It was with the utmost difficulty that ancient Rome could support the institution of six vestals;^b but the primitive church was filled with a great number of persons of either sex, who had devoted themselves to the profession of perpetual chastity.^c A few of these, among whom we may reckon the learned Origen, judged it the most prudent to disarm the tempter.^d Some

^a See a chain of tradition, from Justin Martyr to Jerome, in the *Morale des Peres*; c. iv, 6-26.

^b See a very curious Dissertation on the Vestals, in the *Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, tom. iv. p. 161-227. Notwithstanding the honours and rewards which were bestowed on those virgins, it was difficult to procure a sufficient number; nor could the dread of the most horrible death always restrain their incontinence.

^c Cupiditatem procreandi aut unam sciunt aut nullam. Minucius Felix, c. 31. Justin. *Apolog. Major.* Athenagoras in *Legat.* c. 28. Tertullian *de Cultu Femini*. I. ii.

^d Eusebius, I. vi, 8. Before the fame of Origen had excited envy and persecution, this extraordinary action was rather admired than censured. As it was his general practise to allegorize scripture, it seems unfortunate that, in this instance only, he should have adopted the literal sense.

were insensible and some were invincible against the assaults of the flesh. Disdaining an ignominious flight, the virgins of the warm climate of Africa encountered the enemy in the closest engagement; they permitted priests and deacons to share their bed, and gloried amidst the flames of their unsullied purity. But insulted nature sometimes vindicated her rights, and this new species of martyrdom served only to introduce a new scandal into the church.^a Among the christian ascetics, however (a name which they soon acquired from their painful exercise), many, as they were less presumptuous, were probably more successful. The loss of sensual pleasure was supplied and compensated by spiritual pride. Even the multitude of pagans were inclined to estimate the merit of the sacrifice by its apparent difficulty; and it was in the praise of these chaste spouses of Christ that the fathers have poured forth the troubled stream of their eloquence.^b Such are the early traces of monastic principles and institutions, which, in a subsequent age, have counterbalanced all the temporal advantages of christianity.^c

^a Cyprian Epist. 4, and Dodwell Dissertat. Cyprianic. iii. Something like this rash attempt was long afterwards imputed to the founder of the order of Fontevrault. Bayle has amused himself and his readers on that very delicate subject.

^b Dupin (Bibliothéque Ecclesiastique, tom. i, p. 195) gives a particular account of the dialogue of the ten virgins, as it was composed by Methodius bishop of Tyre. The praises of virginity are excessive.

^c The ascetics (as early as the second century) made a public procession of mortifying their bodies, and of abstaining from the use of flesh and wine. Mosheim, p. 310.

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Their aversion to the business of war and government.

The christians were not less averse to the business than to the pleasures of this world. The defence of our persons and property they knew not how to reconcile with the patient doctrine which enjoined an unlimited forgiveness of past injuries, and commanded them to invite the repetition of fresh insults. Their simplicity was offended by the use of oaths, by the pomp of magistracy, and by the active contention of public life; nor could their humane ignorance be convinced, that it was lawful on any occasion to shed the blood of our fellow-creatures, either by the sword of justice, or by that of war; even though their criminal or hostile attempts should threaten the peace and safety of the whole community.^h It was acknowledged, that under a less perfect law, the powers of the Jewish constitution had been exercised, with the approbation of Heaven, by inspired prophets and by anointed kings. The christians felt and confessed that such institutions might be necessary for the present system of the world, and they cheerfully submitted to the authority of their pagan governors. But while they inculcated the maxims of passive obedience, they refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defence of the empire. Some indulgence might perhaps be allowed to those persons

^h See the *Morale des Peres*. The same patient principles have been revived since the reformation by the socinians, the modern anabaptists, and the quakers. Barclay, the apologist of the quakers, has protected his brethren, by the authority of the primitive christians, p. 542-549.

who, before their conversion, were already engaged in such violent and sanguinary occupations;ⁱ but it was impossible that the christians, without renouncing a more sacred duty, could assume the character of soldiers, of magistrates, or of "princes."^k This indolent, or even criminal, disregard to the public welfare exposed them to the contempt and reproaches of the pagans, who very frequently asked, what must be the fate of the empire, attacked on every side by the barbarians, if all mankind should adopt the pusillanimous sentiments of the new sect?^j To this insulting question the christian apologists returned obscure and ambiguous answers, as they were unwilling to reveal the secret cause of their security; the expectation that, before the conversion of mankind was accomplished, war, government, the Roman empire, and the world itself, would be no more. It may be observed, that, in this instance likewise, the situation of the first christians coincided very happily with their religious scruples, and that their aversion to an active life contributed rather to excuse them from the service, than to exclude them from the honours, of the state and army.

ⁱ Tertullian, *Apolog.* c. 21. *De Idololatriâ*, c. 17, 18. Origen contra Celsum, l. v, p. 253, l. vii, p. 348, l. viii, p. 423-428.

^k Tertullian (*de Corona Militis*, c. 11) suggests to them the expedient of deserting: a counsel, which, if it had been generally known, was not very proper to conciliate the favour of the emperors towards the christian sect.

^j As well as we can judge from the mutilated representation of Origen (l. viii, p. 423), his adversary, Celsus, had urged his objection with great force and candour.

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THE
FIFTH
CAUSE.The chris-
tians active
in the go-
vernment
of the
church.

v. But the human character, however it may be exalted or depressed by a temporary enthusiasm, will return by degrees to its proper and natural level, and will resume those passions that seem the most adapted to its present condition. The primitive christians were deaf to the business and pleasures of the world ; but their love of action, which could never be entirely extinguished, soon revived, and found a new occupation in the government of the church. A separate society, which attacked the established religion of the empire, was obliged to adopt some form of internal policy, and to appoint a sufficient number of ministers, intrusted not only with the spiritual functions, but even with the temporal direction, of the christian commonwealth. The safety of that society, its honour, its aggrandisement, were productive, even in the most pious minds, of a spirit of patriotism, such as the first of the Romans had felt for the republic, and, sometimes, of a similar indifference, in the use of whatever means might probably conduce to so desirable an end. The ambition of raising themselves or their friends to the honours and offices of the church was disguised by the laudable intention of devoting to the public benefit the power and consideration, which, for that purpose only, it became their duty to solicit. In the exercise of their functions, they were frequently called upon to detect the errors of heresy or the arts of faction, to oppose the designs of perfidious brethren, to stigmatize their charac-

ters with deserved infamy, and to expel them from the bosom of a society, whose peace and happiness they had attempted to disturb. The ecclesiastical governors of the christians were taught to unite the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence^m of the dove; but as the former was refined, so the latter was insensibly corrupted, by the habits of government. In the church as well as in the world, the persons who were placed in any public station rendered themselves considerable by their eloquence and firmness, by their knowledge of mankind, and by their dexterity in business; and while they concealed from others, and perhaps from themselves, the secret motives of their conduct, they too frequently relapsed into all the turbulent passions of active life, which were tinctured with an additional degree of bitterness and obstinacy from the infusion of spiritual zeal.

The government of the church has often been the subject, as well as the prize, of religious contention. The hostile disputants of Rome, of Paris, of Oxford, and of Geneva, have alike struggled to reduce the primitive and apostolic model^m to the respective standards of their own policy. The few who have pursued this inquiry with more candour and impartiality are of opinion,ⁿ that the apostles declined the office of

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^m The aristocratical party in France, as well as in England, has strenuously maintained the divine origin of bishops. But the calvinistical presbyters were impatient of a superior; and the Roman pontiff refused to acknowledge an equal. See Fra Paolo.

ⁿ In the history of the christian hierarchy, I have, for the most part, followed the learned and candid Mosheim.

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legislation, and rather chose to endure some partial scandals and divisions, than to exclude the christians of a future age from the liberty of varying their forms of ecclesiastical government according to the changes of times and circumstances. The scheme of policy,⁷ which, under their approbation, was adopted for the use of the first century, may be discovered from the practice of Jerusalem, of Ephesus, or of Corinth. The societies which were instituted in the cities of the Roman empire were united only by the ties of faith and charity. Independence and equality formed the basis of their internal constitution. The want of discipline and human learning was supplied by the occasional assistance of the *prophets*,⁸ who were called to that function without distinction of age, of sex, or of natural abilities, and who, as often as they felt the divine impulse, poured forth the effusions of the spirit in the assembly of the faithful. But these extraordinary gifts were frequently abused or misapplied by the prophetic teachers. They displayed them at an improper season, presumptuously disturbed the service of the assembly, and by their pride or mistaken zeal they introduced, particularly into the apostolic church of Corinth, a long and melancholy train of disorders.⁹ As the institution of prophets became useless,

⁷ For the prophets of the primitive church, see Mosheim, Dissertationes ad Hist. Eccles. pertinentes, tom. ii, p. 132-208.

⁸ See the epistles of St. Paul, and of Clemens, to the Corinthians.

and even pernicious, their powers were withdrawn, and their office abolished. The public functions of religion were solely intrusted to the established ministers of the church, the *bishops* and the *presbyters*; two appellations, which, in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the same office and the same order of persons. The name of presbyter was expressive of their age, or rather of their gravity and wisdom. The title of bishop denoted their inspection over the faith and manners of the christians who were committed to their pastoral care. In proportion to the respective numbers of the faithful, a larger or smaller number of these *episcopal presbyters* guided each infant congregation with equal authority and with united counsels.⁴

But the most perfect equality of freedom requires the directing hand of a superior magistrate; and the order of public deliberations soon introduces the office of a president, invested at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments, and of executing the resolutions, of the assembly. A regard for the public tranquillity, which would so frequently have been interrupted by annual or by occasional elections, induced the primitive christians to constitute an honourable and perpetual magistracy, and to choose one of the wisest and most holy among their *presbyters* to execute, during his life, the duties of their ecclesiastical governor. It was under these circumstances that

⁴ Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, I. vii.

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the lofty title of bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellation of presbyter; and while the latter remained the most natural distinction for the members of every christian senate, the former was appropriated to the dignity of its new president.^r The advantages of this episcopal form of government, which appears to have been introduced before the end of the first century,^s were so obvious, and so important for the future greatness, as well as the present peace, of christianity, that it was adopted without delay by all the societies which were already scattered over the empire, had acquired in a very early period the sanction of antiquity,^t and is still revered by the most powerful churches, both of the East and of the West, as a primitive and even as a divine establishment.^u It is needless to observe, that the pious and humble

^r See Jerome ad Titum, c. 1, and Epistol. 85 (in the Benedictine edition, 101), and the elaborate apology of Blondel, *pro sententia Hieronymi*. The ancient state, as it is described by Jerome, of the bishop and presbyters of Alexandria, receives a remarkable confirmation from the patriarch Eutychius (*Annales*, tom. i, p. 330. Vers. Pocock); whose testimony I know not how to reject, in spite of all the objections of the learned Pearson in his *Vindiciae Ignatianæ*, part i, c. 11.

^s See the introduction to the Apocalypse. Bishops, under the name of angels, were already instituted in the seven cities of Asia. And yet the epistle of Clemens (which is probably of as ancient a date) does not lead us to discover any traces of episcopacy either at Corinth or Rome.

^t *Nulla Ecclesia sine Episcopo*, has been a fact as well as a maxim since the time of Tertullian and Irenæus.

^u After we have passed the difficulties of the first century, we find the episcopal government universally established, till it was interrupted by the republican genius of the Swiss and German reformers.

presbyters, who were first dignified with the episcopal title, could not possess, and would probably have rejected, the power and pomp which now encircles the tiara of the Roman pontiff, or the mitre of a German prelate. But we may define, in a few words, the narrow limits of their original jurisdiction, which was chiefly of a spiritual, though in some instances of a temporal, nature.^x It consisted in the administration of the sacraments and discipline of the church; the superintendency of religious ceremonies, which imperceptibly increased in number and variety; the consecration of ecclesiastical ministers, to whom the bishop assigned their respective functions; the management of the public fund; and the determination of all such differences as the faithful were unwilling to expose before the tribunal of an idolatrous judge. These powers, during a short period, were exercised according to the advice of the presbyterial college, and with the consent and approbation of the assembly of christians. The primitive bishops were considered only as the first of their equals, and the honourable servants of a free people. Whenever the episcopal chair became vacant by death, a new president was chosen among the presbyters by the suffrage of the whole congregation, every

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^x See Mosheim in the first and second centuries. Ignatius (ad Smyrnæos, c. 3, &c.) is fond of exalting the episcopal dignity. Le Clerc (Hist. Eccles. p. 569) very bluntly censures his conduct. Mosheim, with a more critical judgment (p. 161), suspects the purity even of the smaller epistles.

CHAP. member of which supposed himself invested with
XV. a sacred and sacerdotal character.⁷

Provincial
councils.

Such was the mild and equal constitution by which the christians were governed more than an hundred years after the death of the apostles. Every society formed within itself a separate and independent republic; and although the most distant of these little states maintained a mutual as well as friendly intercourse of letters and deputations, the christian world was not yet connected by any supreme authority or legislative assembly. As the numbers of the faithful were gradually multiplied, they discovered the advantages that might result from a closer union of their interest and designs. Towards the end of the second century, the churches of Greece and Asia adopted the useful institutions of provincial synods, and they may justly be supposed to have borrowed the model of a representative council from the celebrated examples of their own country, the Amphictyons, the Achæan league, or the assemblies of the Ionian cities. It was soon established as a custom and as a law, that the bishops of the independent churches should meet in the capital of the province at the stated periods of spring and autumn. Their deliberations were assisted by the advice of a few distinguished presbyters, and moderated by the presence of a

⁷ Nonne et Laici sacerdotes, sumes? Tertullian, *Exhort. ad Castitatem*, c. 7. As the human heart is still the same, several of the observations which Mr. Hume has made on enthusiasm (Essays, vol. i, p. 76, quarto edit.) may be applied even to real inspiration.

listening multitude.² Their decrees, which were styled canons, regulated every important controversy of faith and discipline; and it was natural to believe that a liberal effusion of the holy spirit would be poured on the united assembly of the delegates of the christian people. The institution of synods was so well suited to private ambition and to public interest, that in the space of a few years it was received throughout the whole empire. A regular correspondence was established between the provincial councils, which mutually communicated and approved their respective proceedings; and the catholic church soon assumed a form, and acquired the strength, of a great federative republic.³

As the legislative authority of the particular churches was insensibly superseded by the use of councils, the bishops obtained by their alliance a much larger share of executive and arbitrary power; and as soon as they were connected by a sense of their common interest, they were enabled to attack, with united vigour, the original rights of their clergy and people. The prelates of the third century imperceptibly changed the language of exhortation into that of command, scattered the seeds of future usurpations, and

Union of
the church.

Progress of
episcopal
authority.

² *Acta Concil. Carthag. apud Cyprian. Edit. Fell. p. 158.* This council was composed of eighty-seven bishops from the provinces of Mauritania, Numidia, and Africa; some presbyters and deacons assisted at the assembly; *præsentis plebis maxima parte.*

³ *Aguntur præterea per Græcias illas, certis in locis concilia, &c. Tertullian de Jejuniis, c. 13.* The African mentions it as a recent and foreign institution. The coalition of the christian churches is very ably explained by Mosheim, p. 164-170.

CHAP. supplied, by scripture allegories and declamatory
 XV.^a rhetoric, their deficiency of force and of reason. They exalted the unity and power of the church, as it was represented in the *episcopal office*, of which every bishop enjoyed an equal and undivided portion.^b Princes and magistrates, it was often repeated, might boast an earthly claim to a transitory dominion: it was the episcopal authority alone which was derived from the Deity, and extended itself over this and over another world. The bishops were the ~~king~~ ^{agents} of Christ, the successors of the apostles, and the mystic substitutes of the high priest of the mosaic law. Their exclusive privilege of conferring the sacerdotal character invaded the freedom both of clerical and of popular elections; and if, in the administration of the church, they still consulted the judgment of the presbyters, or the inclination of the people, they most carefully inculcated the merit of such a voluntary condescension. The bishops acknowledged the supreme authority which resided in the assembly of their brethren; but in the government of his peculiar diocese, each of them exacted from his *flock* the same implicit obedience as if that favourite metaphor had been literally just, and as if the shepherd had been of a more exalted nature than that of his sheep.^c This obedience, however,

^a Cyprian, in his admired treatise *De Unitate Ecclesiarum*, p. 75-86.

^b We may appeal to the whole tenor of Cyprian's conduct, of his doctrine, and of his Epistles. Le Clerc, in a short life of Cyprian (*Bibliotheque Universelle*, tom. xii, p. 207-378) has laid him open with great freedom and accuracy.

was not imposed without some efforts on one side, and some resistance on the other. The democratical part of the constitution was, in many places, very warmly supported by the zealous or interested opposition of the inferior clergy. But their patriotism received the ignominious epithets of faction and schism ; and the episcopal cause was indebted for its rapid progress to the labours of many active prelates, who, like Cyprian of Carthage, could reconcile the arts of the most ambitious statesman with the christian virtues which seem adapted to the character of a saint and martyr.^a

The same causes which at first had destroyed the equality of the presbyters introduced among the bishops a pre-eminence of rank, and from thence a superiority of jurisdiction. As often as in the spring and autumn they met in provincial synod, the difference of personal merit and reputation was very sensibly felt among the members of the assembly, and the multitude was governed by the wisdom and eloquence of the few. But the order of public proceedings required a more regular and less invidious distinction ; the office of perpetual presidents in the councils of each province was conferred on the bishops of the principal city, and these aspiring prelates, who soon acquired the lofty titles of metropo-

^a If Novatus, Felicissimus, &c. whom the bishop of Carthage expelled from his church, and from Africa, were not the most detestable monsters of wickedness, the zeal of Cyprian must occasionally have prevailed over his veracity. For a very just account of these obscure quarrels, see Mosheim, p. 497-512.

CHAP. litans and primates, secretly prepared themselves
XV. to usurp over their episcopal brethren the same
authority which the bishops had so lately assumed
above the college of presbyters.^e Nor was it
long before an emulation of pre-eminence and
power prevailed among the metropolitans them-
selves, each of them affecting to display, in the
most pompous terms, the temporal honours and
advantages of the city over which he presided ;
the numbers and opulence of the christians who
were subject to their pastoral care ; the saints and
martyrs who had arisen among them ; and the
purity with which they preserved the tradition
of the faith, as it had been transmitted through
a series of orthodox bishops from the apostle or
the apostolic disciple, to whom the foundation of
their church was ascribed.^f From every cause,
either of a civil or of an ecclesiastical nature, it
was easy to foresee that Rome must enjoy the
respect, and would soon claim the obedience,
of the provinces. The society of the faithful
bore a just proportion to the capital of the em-
pire ; and the Roman church was the greatest,
the most numerous, and, in regard to the West,
the most ancient, of all the christian establish-
ments, many of which had received their reli-
gion from the pious labours of her missionaries.
Instead of *one* apostolic founder, the utmost boast

Ambition
of the Ro-
man pon-
tiff.

^e Mosheim, p. 269, 574. ^f Dupin, Antiquæ Eccles. Disciplin. p. 19, 20.

^f Tertullian, in a distinct treatise, has pleaded against the heretics, the right of prescription, as it was held by the apostolic churches.

of Antioch, of Ephesus, or of Corinth, the CHAP.
banks of the Tyber were supposed to have been XV.
honoured with the preaching and martyrdom of
the *two* most eminent among the apostles;^g
and the bishops of Rome very prudently claimed
the inheritance of whatsoever prerogatives were
attributed either to the person or to the office
of St. Peter.^h The bishops of Italy and of
the provinces were disposed to allow them a
primacy of order and association (such was their
very accurate expression) in the christian aristocracy.ⁱ But the power of a monarch was re-
jected with abhorrence; and the aspiring genius
of Rome experienced from the nations of Asia
and Africa a more vigorous resistance to her
spiritual, than she had formerly done to her tem-
poral, dominion. The patriotic Cyprian, who
ruled with the most absolute sway the church
of Carthage and the provincial synods, opposed

^g The journey of St. Peter to Rome is mentioned by most of the ancients (see Eusebius, ii, 25), maintained by all the catholics, al-
lowed by some protestants (see Pearson and Dodwell de Success. Episcop. Roman.), but has been vigorously attacked by Spanheim (Miscellanea Sacra, iii, 3). According to father Hardouin, the monks of the thirteenth century, who composed the *Æneid*, represented St. Peter under the allegorical character of the Trojan hero.

^h It is in French only, that the famous allusion to St. Peter's name is exact. *Tu es Pierre et sur cette pierre.*—The same is imper-
fect in Greek, Latin, Italian, &c. and totally unintelligible in our
Teutonic languages.

ⁱ Ireneus adv. Hæreses, iii, 3. Tertullian de Præscription. c. 36,
and Cyprian Epistol. 27, 55, 71, 75. Le Clerc (Hist. Eccles. p. 764)
and Mosheim (p. 258, 278) labour in the interpretation of these pas-
sages. But the loose and rhetorical style of the fathers often appears
favourable to the pretensions of Rome.



CHAP. with resolution and success the ambition of the
 XV. Roman pontiff, artfully connected his own cause
 with that of the eastern bishops, and, like
 Hannibal, sought out new allies in the heart of
 Asia.^k If this Punic war was carried on with-
 out any effusion of blood, it was owing much
 less to the moderation than to the weakness of
 the contending prelates. Invectives and excom-
 munications were *their* only weapons; and these,
 during the progress of the whole controversy,
 they hurled against each other with equal fury
 and devotion. The hard necessity of censuring
 either a pope, or a saint and martyr, distresses
 the modern catholics, whenever they are obliged
 to relate the particulars of a dispute, in which
 the champions of religion indulged such passions
 as seem much more adapted to the senate or to
 the camp.^l

Laity and
 clergy.

The progress of the ecclesiastical authority
 gave birth to the memorable distinction of the
 laity and of the clergy, which had been unknown
 to the Greeks and Romans.^m The former of
 these appellations comprehended the body of the
 christian people; the latter, according to the
 signification of the word, was appropriated to
 the chosen portion that had been set apart for

* See the sharp epistle from Firmilianus bishop of Cæsarea, to Stephen bishop of Rome, ap. Cyprian. *Epistol. 75.*

^l Concerning this dispute of the re-baptism of heretics, see the epistles of Cyprian, and the seventh book of Eusebius.

^m For the origin of these words, see Mosheim, p. 141, Spanheim, *Hist. Ecclesiast.* p. 633. The distinction of *clerus* and *laicus* was established before the time of Tertullian.

the service of religion; a celebrated order of men which has furnished the most important, though not always the most edifying, subjects for modern history. Their mutual hostilities sometimes disturbed the peace of the infant church, but their zeal and activity were united in the common cause; and the love of power, which (under the most artful disguises) could insinuate itself into the breasts of bishops and martyrs, animated them to increase the number of their subjects, and to enlarge the limits of the christian empire. They were destitute of any temporal force, and they were for a long time discouraged and oppressed, rather than assisted, by the civil magistrate; but they had acquired, and they employed within their own society, the two most efficacious instruments of government, rewards and punishments; the former derived from the pious liberality, the latter from the devout apprehensions, of the faithful.

1. The community of goods, which had so agreeably amused the imagination of Plato,ⁿ and which subsisted in some degree among the austere sect of the essenians,^o was adopted for a short time in the primitive church. The fervour of the first proselytes prompted them to sell those worldly possessions, which they de-

ⁿ The community instituted by Plato is more perfect than that which Sir Thomas More has imagined for his Utopia. The community of women, and that of temporal goods, may be considered as inseparable parts of the same system.

^o Joseph. Antiquitat. xvii, 2. Philo, de Vit. Contemplativ.

CHAP. spised, to lay the price of them at the feet of
XV. the apostles, and to content themselves with re-
ceiving an equal share out of the general distribu-
tion.^p The progress of the christian religion
relaxed, and gradually abolished, this generous
institution, which in hands less pure than those
of the apostles would too soon have been cor-
rupted and abused by the returning selfishness of
human nature ; and the converts who embraced
the new religion were permitted to retain the
possession of their patrimony, to receive legacies
and inheritances, and to increase their separate
property by all the lawful means of trade and
industry. Instead of an absolute sacrifice, a
moderate proportion was accepted by the mi-
nisters of the gospel ; and in their weekly or
monthly assemblies, every believer, according to
the exigency of the occasion, and the measure of
his wealth and piety, presented his voluntary
offering for the use of the common fund.^q No-
thing, however inconsiderable, was refused ;
but it was diligently inculcated, that, in the
article of tythes, the mosaic law was still of di-
vine obligation ; and that since the Jews, under
a less perfect discipline, had been commanded
to pay a tenth part of all that they possessed,
it would become the disciples of Christ to distin-
guish themselves by a superior degree of libe-

^p See the *Acts of the Apostles*, c. ii, 4, 5, with Grotius's commentary. Mosheim, in a particular dissertation, attacks the common opinion with very inconclusive arguments.

^q *Justin. Martyr. Apolog. Major*, c. 89. *Tertullian. Apolog.* c. 39.

rality,^r and to acquire some merit by resigning a superfluous treasure, which must so soon be annihilated with the world itself.^s It is almost unnecessary to observe, that the revenue of each particular Church, which was of so uncertain and fluctuating a nature, must have varied with the poverty or the opulence of the faithful, as they were dispersed in obscure villages, or collected in the great cities of the empire. In the time of the emperor Decius, it was the opinion of the magistrates, that the christians of Rome were possessed of very considerable wealth; that vessels of gold and silver were used in their religious worship; and that many among their proselytes had sold their lands and houses to increase the public riches of the sect; at the expence, indeed, of their unfortunate children, who found themselves beggars, because their parents had been saints.^t We should listen

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^r Irenaeus ad Hæres. 1. iv, c. 27, 34. Origen in Num. Hom. ii. Cyprian de Unitat. Eccles. Constitut. Apostol. 1. ii, c. 34, 35, with the notes of Cotelerius. The Constitutions introduce this divine precept, by declaring that priests are as much above kings as the soul is above the body. Among the tythable articles, they enumerate corn, wine, oil, and wood. On this interesting subject, consult Prideaux's History of Tythes, and Fra Paolo delle Materie Beneficiarie; two writers of a very different character.

^s The same opinion which prevailed about the year one thousand was productive of the same effects. Most of the donations express their motive, " appropinquante mundi fine." See Mosheim's General History of the Church, vol. i, p. 457.

^t Tum summa cura est fratribus

(Ut sermo testatur Iouquax).

Offerre, fundis venditis

Sestertiorum millia.

Addicta

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with distrust to the suspicions of strangers and enemies: on this occasion, however, they receive a very specious and probable colour from the two following circumstances, the only ones that have reached our knowledge, which define any precise sums, or convey any distinct idea. Almost at the same period, the bishop of Carthage, from a society less opulent than that of Rome, collected an hundred thousand sesterces (above eight hundred and fifty pounds sterling), on a sudden call of charity to redeem the brethren of Numidia, who had been carried away captives by the barbarians of the desert.^u About an hundred years before the reign of Decius, the Roman church had received, in a single donation, the sum of two hundred thousand sesterces from a stranger of Pontus, who proposed to fix his residence in the capital.^x These oblations, for the most part, were made in money; nor

Addicta avorum prædia
Fœdis sub auctionibus,
Successor exheres gemit
Sanctis egens parentibus.
Hæc occuluntur abditis
Ecclesiarum in Angulis.
Et summa pietas treditur
Nudare dulces liberos.

Prudent. *περὶ τερψανῶν*. Hymn. 2.

The subsequent conduct of the deacon Laurence only proves how proper a use was made of the wealth of the Roman church; it was undoubtedly very considerable; but Fra Paolo (c. 3) appears to exaggerate, when he supposes that the successors of Commodus were urged to persecute the christians by their own avarice, or that of their praetorian prefects.

^u Cyprian. Epistol. 62.

^x Tertullian de Prescriptions, c. 30.

was the society of christians either desirous or capable of acquiring, to any considerable degree, the incumbrance of landed property. It had been provided by several laws, which were enacted with the same design as our statutes of mortmain, that no real estates should be given or bequeathed to any corporate body, without either a special privilege or a particular dispensation from the emperor or from the senate; ^x who were seldom disposed to grant them in favour of a sect, at first the object of their contempt, and at last of their fears and jealousy. A transaction, however, is related under the reign of Alexander Severus, which discovers that the restraint was sometimes eluded or suspended, and that the christians were permitted to claim and to possess lands within the limits of Rome itself.^z The progress of christianity, and the civil confusion of the empire, contributed to relax the severity of the laws; and, before the close of the third century, many considerable estates were bestowed on the opulent churches of Rome, Milan, Carthage, Antioch, Alexandria, and the other great cities of Italy and the provinces.

The bishop was the natural steward of the church; the public stock was intrusted to his care without account or controul; the presbyters

^x Diocletian gave a rescript, which is only a declaration of the old law: "Collegium, si nullo speciali privilegio subnixum sit, hæreditatem capere non posse, dubium non est." Fra. Paolo (c. 4) thinks that these regulations had been much neglected since the reign of Valerian.

^z Hist. August. p. 131. The ground had been public; and was now disputed between the society of christians and that of butchers.

CHAP. XV. were confined to their spiritual functions ; and the more dependent order of deacons was solely employed in the management and distribution of the ecclesiastical revenue.^a If we may give credit to the vehement declamations of Cyprian, there were too many among his African brethren, who, in the execution of their charge, violated every precept, not only of evangelic perfection, but even of moral virtue. By some of these unfaithful stewards the riches of the church were lavished in sensual pleasures ; by others they were perverted to the purposes of private gain, of fraudulent purchases, and of rapacious usury.^b But as long as the contributions of the christian people were free and unconstrained, the abuse of their confidence could not be very frequent ; and the general uses to which their liberality was applied reflected honour on the religious society. A decent portion was reserved for the maintenance of the bishop and his clergy ; a sufficient sum was allotted for the expences of the public worship, of which the feasts of love, the *agape*, as they were called, constituted a very pleasing part. The whole remainder was the sacred patrimony of the poor. According to the discretion of the bishop, it was distributed to support widows and orphans, the lame, the sick, and the aged, of the community ; to comfort strangers and pilgrims, and to alleviate the misfortunes of

^a Constitut. Apostol. ii, 35.

^b Cyprian de Lapsis, p. 89. Epistol. 65. The charge is confirmed by the nineteenth and twentieth canon of the council of Illiberis.

prisoners and captives, more especially when their sufferings had been occasioned by their firm attachment to the cause of religion.^c A generous intercourse of charity united the most distant provinces, and the smaller congregations were cheerfully assisted by the alms of their more opulent brethren.^d Such an institution, which paid less regard to the merit than to the distress of the object, very materially conduced to the progress of christianity. The pagans, who were actuated by a sense of humanity, while they derided the doctrines, acknowledged the benevolence, of the new sect.^e The prospect of immediate relief and of future protection allure^d into its hospitable bosom many of those unhappy persons whom the neglect of the world would have abandoned to the miseries of want, of sickness, and of old age. There is some reason likewise to believe, that great numbers of infants, who, according to the inhuman practice of the times, had been exposed by their parents, were frequently rescued from death, baptised, educated, and maintained, by the piety of the christians, and at the expence of the public treasure.^f

^c See the apologies of Justin, Tertullian, &c.

^d The wealth and liberality of the Romans to their most distant brethren is gratefully celebrated by Dionysius of Corinth, ap. Euseb. I. iv, c. 23.

^e See Lucian in *Peregrin.* Julian (Epist. 49) seems mortified, that the christian charity maintains not only their own, but likewise the heathen poor.

^f Such, at least, has been the laudable conduct of more modern missionaries, under the same circumstances. Above three thousand new-

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Excommu-
nication.

II. It is the undoubted right of every society to exclude from its communion and benefits such among its members as reject or violate those regulations which have been established by general consent. In the exercise of this power, the censures of the christian church were chiefly directed against scandalous sinners, and particularly those who were guilty of murder, of fraud, or of incontinence; against the authors, or the followers, of any heretical opinions which had been condemned by the judgment of the episcopal order; and against those unhappy persons, who, whether from choice or from compulsion, had polluted themselves after their baptism by any act of idolatrous worship. The consequences of excommunication were of a temporal, as well as a spiritual, nature. The christian against whom it was pronounced was deprived of any part in the oblations of the faithful; the ties both of religious and of private friendship were dissolved; he found himself a profane object of abhorrence to the persons whom he the most esteemed, or by whom he had been the most tenderly beloved; and, as far as an expulsion from a respectable society could imprint on his character a mark of disgrace, he was shunned or suspected by the generality of mankind. The situation of these unfortunate exiles was in itself very painful and melancholy; but, as it usually happens, their apprehensions far exceeded their

new-born infants are annually exposed in the streets of Pekin. See Le Comte Memoires sur la Chine, and the Recherches sur les Chinois et les Egyptiens, tom. i, p. 61.

sufferings. The benefits of the christian communion were those of eternal life, nor could they erase from their minds the awful opinion, that to those ecclesiastical governors by whom they were condemned, the Deity had committed the keys of hell and of paradise. The heretics, indeed, who might be supported by the consciousness of their intentions, and by the flattering hope that they alone had discovered the true path of salvation, endeavoured to regain, in their separate assemblies, those comforts, temporal as well as spiritual, which they no longer derived from the great society of christians. But almost all those who had reluctantly yielded to the power of vice or idolatry were sensible of their fallen condition, and anxiously desirous of being restored to the benefits of the christian communion.

With regard to the treatment of these penitents, two opposite opinions, the one of justice, the other of mercy, divided the primitive church. The more rigid and inflexible casuists refused them for ever, and without exception, the meanest place in the holy community which they had disgraced or deserted, and leaving them to the remorse of a guilty conscience, indulged them only with a faint ray of hope, that the contrition of their life and death might possibly be accepted by the Supreme Being.^s A milder

^s The montanists and the novatians, who adhered to this opinion with the greatest rigour and obstinacy, found *themselves* at last in the number of excommunicated heretics. See the learned and copious Mosheim, Secul. ii and iii.

CHAP. sentiment was embraced in practice as well as in theory, by the purest and most respectable of the christian churches.^h The gates of reconciliation and of heaven were seldom shut against the returning penitent; but a severe and solemn form of discipline was instituted, which, while it served to expiate his crime, might powerfully deter the spectators from the imitation of his example. Humbled by a public confession, emaciated by fasting, and clothed in sackcloth, the penitent lay prostrate at the door of the assembly, imploring with tears the pardon of his offences, and soliciting the prayers of the faithful.ⁱ If the fault was of a very heinous nature, whole years of penance were esteemed an inadequate satisfaction to the divine justice; and it was always by slow and painful gradations that the sinner, the heretic, or the apostate, was re-admitted into the bosom of the church. A sentence of perpetual excommunication was, however, reserved for some crimes of an extraordinary magnitude, and particularly for the inexcusable relapses of those penitents who had already experienced and abused the clemency of their ecclesiastical superiors. According to the circumstances of the number of the guilty, the exercise of the christian discipline was varied by the discretion of the bishops. The councils of Ancyra and Illiberis were held about the same

^h Dionysius ap. Euseb. iv, 23. Cyprian, de Lapsi.

ⁱ Cave's Primitive Christianity, part iii, c. 5. The admirers of antiquity regret the loss of this public penance.

time, the one in Galatia, the other in Spain; but their respective canons, which are still extant, seem to breathe a very different spirit. The Galatian, who after his baptism had repeatedly sacrificed to idols, might obtain his pardon by a penance of seven years; and if he had seduced others to imitate his example, only three years more were added to the term of his exile. But the unhappy Spaniard, who had committed the same offence, was deprived of the hope of reconciliation, even in the article of death; and his idolatry was placed at the head of a list of seventeen other crimes, against which a sentence no less terrible was pronounced. Among these we may distinguish the inexpiable guilt of calumniating a bishop, a presbyter, or even a deacon.^k

The well-tempered mixture of liberality and rigour, the judicious dispensation of rewards and punishments, according to the maxims of policy as well as justice, constituted the *human* strength of the church. The bishops, whose paternal care extended itself to the government of both worlds, were sensible of the importance of these prerogatives; and covering their ambition with the fair pretence of the love of order, they were jealous of any rival in the exercise of a discipline

The digni-
ty of epis-
copal go-
vernment.

* See in Dupin *Bibliothèque Ecclesiastique*, tom. ii, p. 304-313, a short but rational exposition of the canons of those councils, which were assembled in the first moments of tranquillity, after the persecution of Diocletian. This persecution had been much less severely felt in Spain than in Galatia; a difference which may, in some measure, account for the contrast of their regulations.

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so necessary to prevent the desertion of those troops which had enlisted themselves under the banner of the cross, and whose numbers every day became more considerable: From the imperious declamations of Cyprian, we should naturally conclude, that the doctrines of excommunication and penance formed the most essential part of religion; and that it was much less dangerous for the disciples of Christ to neglect the observance of the moral duties, than to despise the censures and authority of their bishops. Sometimes we might imagine that we were listening to the voice of Moses, when he commanded the earth to open, and to swallow up, in consuming flames, the rebellious race which refused obedience to the priesthood of Aaron; and we should sometimes suppose that we heard a Roman consul asserting the majesty of the republic, and declaring his inflexible resolution to enforce the rigour of the laws. " If such irregularities are suffered with impunity (it is thus that the bishop of Carthage chides the lenity of his colleague), if such irregularities are suffered, there is an end of *episcopal vigour*;¹ an end of the sublime and divine power of governing the church; an end of christianity itself." Cyprian had renounced those temporal honours, which it is probable he would never have obtained; but the acquisition of such absolute command over the consciences and understanding of a congregation, however obscure or

¹ Cyprian Epist. 69.

despised by the world, is more truly grateful to the pride of the human heart, than the possession of the most despotic power, imposed by arms and conquest on a reluctant people.

In the course of this important, though perhaps tedious, enquiry, I have attempted to display the secondary causes which so efficaciously assisted the truth of the christian religion. If among these causes we have discovered any artificial ornaments, any accidental circumstances, or any mixture of error and passion, it cannot appear surprising that mankind should be the most sensibly affected by such motives as were suited to their imperfect nature. It was by the aid of these causes, exclusive zeal, the immediate expectation of another world, the claim of

miracles, the practice of rigid virtue, and the constitution of the primitive church, that christianity spread itself with so much success in the Roman empire. To the first of these the christians were indebted for their invincible valour, which disdained to capitulate with the enemy whom they were resolved to vanquish. The three succeeding causes supplied their valour with the most formidable arms. The last of

these causes united their courage, directed their arms, and gave their efforts that irresistible weight, which even a small band of well-trained and intrepid volunteers has so often possessed over an undisciplined multitude, ignorant of the subject, and careless of the event of the war.

In the various religions of polytheism, some

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Recapitula-
tion of the
five causes.

Weakness
of poly-
theism

CHAP. XV. wandering fanatics of Egypt and Syria, who addressed themselves to the credulous superstition of the populace, were perhaps the only order of priests^m that derived their whole support and credit from their sacerdotal profession, and were very deeply affected by a personal concern for the safety or prosperity of their tutelar deities. The ministers of polytheism, both in Rome and in the provinces, were, for the most part, men of a noble birth, and of an affluent fortune, who received, as an honourable distinction, the care of a celebrated temple, or of a public sacrifice, exhibited very frequently at their own expence the sacred games,ⁿ and with cold indifference performed the ancient rites, according to the laws and fashion of their country. As they were engaged in the ordinary occupations of life, their zeal and devotion were seldom animated by a sense of interest, or by the habits of an ecclesiastical character. Confined to their respective temples and cities, they remained without any connection of discipline or government; and whilst they acknowledged the supreme jurisdiction of the senate, of the college of pontiffs, and

^m The arts, the manners, and the vices, of the priests of the Syrian goddess, are very humorously described by Apulius, in the eighth book of his *Metamorphosis*.

ⁿ The office of asiarch was of this nature, and it is frequently mentioned in Aristides, the *Inscriptions*, &c. It was annual and elective. None but the vainest citizens could desire the honour; none but the most wealthy could support the expence. See in the *Patres Apostol.* tom. ii, p. 200, with how much indifference Philip the asiarch conducted himself in the martyrdom of Polycarp. There were likewise bithynarchs, lyciarchs, &c.

of the emperor, those civil magistrates contented themselves with the easy task of maintaining, in peace and dignity, the general worship of mankind. We have already seen how various, how loose, and how uncertain, were the religious sentiments of polytheists. They were abandoned, almost without controul, to the natural workings of a superstitious fancy. The accidental circumstances of their life and situation determined the object as well as the degree of their devotion; and as long as their adoration was successively prostituted to a thousand deities, it was scarcely possible that their hearts could be susceptible of a very sincere or lively passion for any of them.

When christianity appeared in the world, even these faint and imperfect impressions had lost much of their original power. Human reason, which by its unassisted strength is incapable of perceiving the mysteries of faith, had already obtained an easy triumph over the folly of paganism; and when Tertullian or Lactantius employ their labours in exposing its falsehood and extravagance, they are obliged to transcribe the eloquence of Cicero or the wit of Lucian. The contagion of these sceptical writings had been diffused far beyond the number of their readers. The fashion of incredulity was communicated from the philosopher to the man of pleasure or business; from the noble to the plebeian; and from the master to the menial slave who waited at his table, and who eagerly listened to the freedom of his conversation. On public occasions the philosophic part of mankind affected

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to treat with respect and decency the religious institutions of their country; but their secret contempt penetrated through the thin and awkward disguise; and even the people, when they discovered that their deities were rejected and derided by those whose rank or understanding they were accustomed to reverence, were filled with doubts and apprehensions concerning the truth of those doctrines, to which they had yielded the most implicit belief. The decline of ancient prejudice exposed a very numerous portion of human kind to the danger of a painful and comfortless situation. A state of scepticism and suspense may amuse a few inquisitive minds; but the practice of superstition is so congenial to the multitude, that if they are forcibly awakened, they still regret the loss of their pleasing vision. Their love of the marvellous and supernatural, their curiosity with regard to future events, and their strong propensity to extend their hopes and fears beyond the limits of the visible world, were the principal causes which favoured the establishment of polytheism. So urgent on the vulgar is the necessity of believing, that the fall of any system of mythology will most probably be succeeded by the introduction of some other mode of superstition. Some deities of a more recent and fashionable cast might soon have occupied the deserted temples of Jupiter and Apollo, if, in the decisive moment, the wisdom of Providence had not interposed a genuine revelation, fitted to inspire the most rational esteem and conviction,

whilst, at the same time, it was adorned with all that could attract the curiosity, the wonder, and the veneration, of the people. In their actual disposition, as many were almost disengaged from their artificial prejudices, but equally susceptible and desirous of a devout attachment; an object much less deserving would have been sufficient to fill the vacant place in their hearts, and to gratify the uncertain eagerness of their passions. Those who are inclined to pursue this reflection, instead of viewing with astonishment the rapid progress of christianity, will perhaps be surprised that its success was not still more rapid and still more universal.

It has been observed, with truth as well as propriety, that the conquests of Rome prepared and facilitated those of christianity. In the second chapter of this work, we have attempted to explain in what manner the most civilized provinces of Europe, Asia, and Africa, were united under the dominion of one sovereign, and gradually connected by the most intimate ties of laws, of manners, and of language. The Jews of Palestine, who had fondly expected a temporal deliverer, gave so cold a reception to the miracles of the divine prophet, that it was found unnecessary to publish, or at least to preserve, any Hebrew gospel.^o The authentic histories of the actions of Christ were composed in the

^o The modern critics are not disposed to believe what the fathers almost unanimously assert, that St. Matthew composed a Hebrew gospel, of which only the Greek translation is extant. It seems, however, dangerous to reject their testimony.

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Greek language, at a considerable distance from Jerusalem, and after the gentile converts were grown extremely numerous.^P As soon as those histories were translated into the Latin tongue, they were perfectly intelligible to all the subjects of Rome, excepting only to the peasants of Syria and Egypt, for whose benefit particular versions were afterwards made. The public highways, which had been constructed for the use of the legions, opened an easy passage for the christian missionaries from Damascus to Corinth, and from Italy to the extremity of Spain or Britain; nor did those spiritual conquerors encounter any of the obstacles which usually retard or prevent the introduction of a foreign religion into a distant country. There is the strongest reason to believe, that before the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, the faith of Christ had been preached in every province, and in all the great cities of the empire; but the foundation of the several congregations, the numbers of the faithful who composed them, and their proportion to the unbelieving multitude, are now buried in obscurity, or disguised by fiction and declamation. Such imperfect circumstances, however, as have reached our knowledge concerning the increase of the christian name in Asia and Greece, in Egypt, in Italy, and in the West, we shall now proceed to relate, without neglecting the real or imaginary

Historical
view of the
progress of
christian-
ity.

^P Under the reigns of Nero and Domitian, and in the cities of Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Ephesus. See Mill. Prolegomena ad Nov. Testament. and Dr. Lardner's fair and extensive collection, vol. xv.

acquisitions which lay beyond the frontiers of CHAP.
the Roman empire. XV.

The rich provinces that extend from the Eu-^{In the East.} phrates to the Ionian sea were the principal theatre on which the apostle of the gentiles displayed his zeal and piety. The seeds of the gospel, which he had scattered in a fertile soil, were diligently cultivated by his disciples; and it should seem that, during the two first centuries, the most considerable body of christians was contained within those limits. Among the societies which were instituted in Syria, none were more ancient or more illustrious than those of Damascus, of Berea or Aleppo, and of Antioch. The prophetic introduction of the Apocalypse has described and immortalised the seven churches of Asia, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira,^a Sardes, Laodicea, and Philadelphia; and their colonies were soon diffused over that populous country. In a very early period, the islands of Cyprus and Crete, the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia, gave a favourable reception to the new religion; and christian republics were soon founded in the cities of Corinth, of Sparta, and of Athens.^b The antiquity of the Greek and Asiatic churches allowed a suf-

^a The alogians (Epiphanius de Hæres. 51) disputed the genuineness of the Apocalypse, because the church of Thyatira was not yet founded. Epiphanius, who allows the fact, extricates himself from the difficulty, by ingeniously supposing, that St. John wrote in the spirit of prophecy. See Abauzit Discours sur l'Apocalypse.

^b The epistles of Ignatius and Dionysius (ap Euseb. iv, 23) point out many churches in Asia and Greece. That of Athens seems to have been one of the least flourishing.

CHAP. ficient space of time for their increase and multiplication; and even the swarms of gnostics and other heretics serve to display the flourishing condition of the orthodox church, since the appellation of heretics has always been applied to the less numerous party. To these domestic testimonies we may add the confession, the complaints, and the apprehensions, of the gentiles themselves. From the writings of Lucian, a philosopher who had studied mankind, and who describes their manners in the most lively colours, we may learn, that, under the reign of Commodus, his native country of Pontus was filled with epicureans and *christians*.^s Within fourscore years after the death of Christ,^t the humane Pliny laments the magnitude of the evil which he vainly attempted to eradicate. In his very curious epistle to the emperor Trajan, he affirms, that the temples were almost deserted, that the sacred victims scarcely found any purchasers, and that the superstition had not only infected the cities, but had even spread itself into the villages and the open country of Pontus and Bithynia.^u

The
church of
Antioch.

Without descending into a minute scrutiny of the expressions, or of the motives, of those writ-

^s Lucian in Alexandro. c. 25. Christianity, however, must have been very unequally diffused over Pontus; since in the middle of the third century there were no more than seventeen believers in the extensive diocese of Neo Cæsaria. See M. de Tillemont. *Mémoires Ecclesiast.* tom. iv. p. 675, from Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, who were themselves natives of Cappadocia.

^t According to the ancients, Jesus Christ suffered under the consulship of the two Gemini, in the year 29 of our present era. Pliny was sent into Bithynia (according to Pagi) in the year 110.

^u Plin. Epist. x, 97.

ers who either celebrate or lament the progress of christianity in the East, it may in general be observed, that none of them have left us any grounds from whence a just estimate might be formed of the real numbers of the faithful in those provinces. One circumstance, however, has been fortunately preserved, which seems to cast a more distinct light on this obscure but interesting subject. Under the reign of Theodosius, after christianity had enjoyed during more than sixty years the sunshine of imperial favour, the ancient and illustrious church of Antioch consisted of one hundred thousand persons, three thousand of whom were supported out of the public oblations.² The splendour and dignity of the queen of the East, the acknowledged populousness of Cæsarea, Seleucia, and Alexandria, and the destruction of two hundred and fifty thousand souls in the earthquake which afflicted Antioch under the elder Justin,³ are so many convincing proofs that the whole number of its inhabitants was not less than half a million, and that the christians, however multiplied by zeal and power, did not exceed a fifth part of that great city. How different a proportion must we adopt when we compare the persecuted with the triumphant church, the West with the East, remote villages with populous towns, and countries recently converted to the faith, with

² Chrysostom. Opera, tom. vii, p. 658, 810.

³ John Malela, tom. ii, p. 144. He draws the same conclusion with regard to the populousness of Antioch.

CHAP. the place where the believers first received the
 XV. appellation of christians ! It must not, however,
 be dissembled, that, in another passage, Chrysostom, to whom we are indebted for this useful
 information, computes the multitude of the faithful as even superior to that of the Jews and pagans.* But the solution of this apparent difficulty is easy and obvious. The eloquent preacher draws a parallel between the civil and the ecclesiastical constitution of Antioch ; between the list of christians who had acquired heaven by baptism, and the list of citizens who had a right to share the public liberality. Slaves, strangers, and infants, were comprised in the former ; they were excluded from the latter.

In Egypt. The extensive commerce of Alexandria, and its proximity to Palestine, gave an easy entrance to the new religion. It was at first embraced by great numbers of the therapeutæ, or essenians of the lake Mareotis, a Jewish sect which had abated much of its reverence for the mosaic ceremonies. The austere life of the essenians, their fasts and excommunications, the community of goods, the love of celibacy, their zeal for martyrdom, and the warmth though not the purity of their faith, already offered a very lively image of the primitive discipline.^a It was in

* Chrysostom. tom. i, p. 592. I am indebted for these passages, though not for my inference, to the learned Dr. Lardner. Credibility of the Gospel History, vol. xii, p. 370.

^a Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, 1. 2, c. 20, 21, 22, 23, has examined, with the most critical accuracy, the curious treatise of Philo,

the school of Alexandria that the christian theology appears to have assumed a regular and scientifical form ; and when Hadrian visited Egypt, he found a church composed of Jews and of Greeks, sufficiently important to attract the notice of that inquisitive prince.^b But the progress of christianity was for a long time confined within the limits of a single city, which was itself a foreign colony ; and till the close of the second century the predecessors of Demetrius were the only prelates of the Egyptian church. Three bishops were consecrated by the hands of Demetrius, and the number was increased to twenty by his successor Heraclas.^c The body of the natives, a people distinguished by a sullen inflexibility of temper,^d entertained the new doctrine with coldness and reluctance ; and even in the time of Origen, it was rare to meet with an Egyptian who had surmounted his early prejudices in favour of the sacred animals of his country.^e As soon, indeed, as christianity ascended

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which describes the therapeute. By proving that it was composed as early as the time of Augustus, Basnage has demonstrated, in spite of Eusebius (l. ii. c. 17), and a crowd of modern catholics, that the therapeute were neither christians nor monks. It still remains probable that they changed their name, preserved their manners, adopted some new articles of faith, and gradually became the fathers of the Egyptian ascetics.

^b See a letter of Hadrian, in the Augustan History, p. 245.

^c For the succession of Alexandrian bishops, consult Renaudot's History, p. 24, &c. This curious fact is preserved by the patriarch Eutychius (Annal. tom. i, p. 334, Vers. Pocock), and its internal evidence would alone be a sufficient answer to all the objections which Bishop Pearson has urged in the *Vindicta Ignatiana*.

^d Ammian. Marcellin. xxii, 16.

^e Origen contra Celsum, l. i, p. 40.

CHAP. XV. the throne, the zeal of those barbarians obeyed the prevailing impulsion; the cities of Egypt were filled with bishops, and the deserts of Thebais swarmed with hermits.

In Rome. A perpetual stream of strangers and provincials flowed into the spacious bosom of Rome. Whatever was strange or odious, whoever was guilty or suspected, might hope, in the obscurity of that immense capital, to elude the vigilance of the law. In such a various conflux of nations, every teacher, either of truth or of falsehood, every founder, whether of a virtuous or a criminal association, might easily multiply his disciples or accomplices. The christians of Rome, at the time of the accidental persecution of Nero, are represented by Tacitus as already amounting to a very great multitude,^f and the language of that great historian is almost similar to the style employed by Livy, when he relates the introduction and the suppression of the rites of Bacchus. After the bacchanals had awakened the severity of the senate, it was likewise apprehended that a very great multitude, as it were *another people*, had been initiated into those abhorred mysteries. A more careful inquiry soon demonstrated, that the offenders did not exceed seven thousand; a number indeed sufficiently alarming, when considered as the object of public justice.^g It is with the same candid allow-

^f *Ingens multitudo* is the expression of Tacitus, xv, 44.

^g T. Liv. xxxix, 13, 15, 16, 17. Nothing could exceed the horror and consternation of the senate on the discovery of the bacchanalians, whose depravity is described, and perhaps exaggerated, by Livy.

ance that we should interpret the vague expressions of Tacitus, and in a former instance of Pliny, when they exaggerate the crowds of deluded fanatics who had forsaken the established worship of the gods.^h The church of Rome was undoubtedly the first and most populous of the empire; and we are possessed of an authentic record which attests the state of religion in that city about the middle of the third century, and after a peace of thirty-eight years. The clergy, at that time, consisted of a bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, as many sub-deacons, forty-two acolythes, and fifty readers, exorcists, and porters. The number of widows, of the infirm, and of the poor, who were maintained by the oblations of the faithful, amounted to fifteen hundred.^k From reason, as well as from the analogy of Antioch, we may venture to estimate the christians of Rome at about fifty thousand. The populousness of that great capital cannot perhaps be exactly ascertained; but the most modest calculation will not surely reduce it lower than a million of inhabitants, of whom the christians might constitute at the most a twentieth part.ⁱ

^h Eusebius, l. vi, c. 43. The Latin translator (M. de Valois) has thought proper to reduce the number of presbyters to forty-four.

ⁱ This proportion of the presbyters and of the poor, to the rest of the people, was originally fixed by Burnet (*Travels into Italy*, p. 168), and is approved by Moyle (vol. ii, p. 151). They were both unacquainted with the passage of Chrysostom, which converts their conjecture almost into a fact.

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XV.In Africa
and the
western
provinces.

The western provincials appeared to have derived the knowledge of christianity from the same source which had diffused among them the language, the sentiments, and the manners, of Rome. In this more important circumstance, Africa, as well as Gaul, was gradually fashioned to the imitation of the capital. Yet notwithstanding the many favourable occasions which might invite the Roman missionaries to visit the Latin provinces, it was late before they passed either the sea or the Alps;^k nor can we discover in those great countries any assured traces either of faith or of persecution that ascend higher than the reign of the Antonines.^l The slow progress of the gospel in the cold climate of Gaul was extremely different from the eagerness with which it seems to have been received on the burning sands of Africa. The African christians soon formed one of the principal members of the primitive church. The practice introduced into that province, of appointing bishops to the most inconsiderable towns, and very frequently to the most obscure villages, contributed to multiply the splendour

^k Serius trans Alpes, religione Dei susceptā. Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. These were the celebrated martyrs of Lyons. See Eusebius, v, 1. Tillemont, Mem. Ecclesiast. tom. ii, p. 316. According to the donatists, whose assertion is confirmed by the tacit acknowledgement of Augustin, Africa was the lust of the provinces which received the gospel. Tillemont, Mem. Ecclesiast. tom. i, p. 754.

^l Tum primum intra Gallias martyria visa. Sulp. Severus, l. ii. With regard to Africa, see Tertullian ad Scapulam, c. 3. It is imagined, that the Scyllitan martyrs were the first (Acta Sincera Ruinart, p. 34). One of the adversaries of Apuleius seems to have been a christian. Apolog. p. 496, 497, edit. Delphin.

and importance of their religious societies, which during the course of the third century were animated by the zeal of Tertullian, directed by the abilities of Cyprian, and adorned by the eloquence of Lactantius. But if, on the contrary, we turn our eyes towards Gaul, we must content ourselves with discovering, in the time of Marcus Antoninus, the feeble and united congregations of Lyons and Vienna; and even as late as the reign of Decius, we are assured, that in a few cities only, Arles, Narbonne, Thoulouse, Limoges, Clermont, Tours, and Paris, some scattered churches were supported by the devotion of a small number of christians.^m Silence is indeed very consistent with devotion; but as it is seldom compatible with zeal, we may perceive and lament the languid state of christianity in those provinces which had exchanged the Celtic for the Latin tongue; since they did not, during the three first centuries, give birth to a single ecclesiastical writer. From Gaul, which claimed a just pre-eminence of learning and authority over all the countries on this side of the Alps, the light of the gospel was more faintly reflected on the remote provinces of Spain and Britain; and if we may credit the vehement assertions of Tertullian, they had already received the first rays

^m *Raræ in aliquibus civitatibus ecclesiæ, paucorum christianorum devotione, resurgerent. Acta Sincera, p. 130. Gregory of Tours, l. i. c. 28. Mosheim, p. 207, 449.* There is some reason to believe that, in the beginning of the fourth century, the extensive dioceses of Liege, of Treves, and of Cologne, composed a single bishopric, which had been very recently founded. *ee Memoires de Tillemont, tom. vi, part i, p. 43, 411.*

CHAP. of the faith, when he addressed his apology to
XV. the magistrates of the emperor Severus.^a But
the obscure and imperfect origin of the western
churches of Europe has been so negligently re-
corded, that if we would relate the time and
manner of their foundation, we must supply the
silence of antiquity by those legends which ava-
rice or superstition long afterwards dictated to
the monks in the lazy gloom of their convents.
Of these holy romances that of the apostle St.
James can alone, by its single extravagance, de-
serve to be mentioned. From a peaceful fisher-
man of the lake of Gennesareth, he was trans-
formed into a valorous knight, who charged at
the head of the Spanish chivalry in their battles
against the Moors. The gravest historians have
celebrated his exploits; the miraculous shrine of
Compostella displayed his power; and the sword
of a military order, assisted by the terrors of the
inquisition, was sufficient to remove every objec-
tion of profane criticism.^b

Beyond the limits of the Roman empire. The progress of christianity was not confined to the Roman empire; and according to the primitive fathers, who interpret facts by prophecy,

^a The date of Tertullian's Apology is fixed, in a dissertation of Mosheim, to the year 198.

^b In the fifteenth century, there were few who had either inclina-
tion or courage to question, whether Joseph of Arimathea founded the
monastery of Glastenbury, and whether Dionysius the Areopagite
preferred the residence of Paris to that of Athens.

^c The stupendous metamorphosis was performed in the ninth cen-
tury. See Mariana (Hist. Hispan. l. vii, c. 13, tom. i, p. 285, edit.
Hag. Com. 1733), who, in every sense, imitates Livy, and the honest
detection of the legend of St. James by Dr. Geddes, Miscellanies, vol.
ii, p. 221.

the new religion, within a century after the death of its divine author, had already visited every part of the globe. "There exists not," says Justin Martyr, "a people, whether Greek or barbarian, or any other race of men, by whatsoever appellation or manners they may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell under tents, or wander about in covered waggons, among whom prayers are not offered up in the name of a crucified Jesus to the Father and Creator of all things.^a But this splendid exaggeration, which even at present it would be extremely difficult to reconcile with the real state of mankind, can be considered only as the rash sally of a devout but careless writer, the measure of whose belief was regulated by that of his wishes. But neither the belief, nor the wishes, of the fathers can alter the truth of history. It will still remain an undoubted fact, that the barbarians of Scythia and Germany, who afterwards subverted the Roman monarchy, were involved in the darkness of paganism; and that even the conversion of Iberia, of Armenia, or of *Aethiopia*, was not attempted with any degree of success till the sceptre was in the hands of an orthodox emperor.^b Before that time, the various accidents

^a Justin. Martyr, *Dialog. cum Tryphon.* p. 341. Irenæus *adv. Haeres.* 1. i. c. 10. Tertullian *adv. Jud.* c. 7. See Mosheim, p. 203.

^b See the fourth century of Mosheim's *History of the Church*. Many though very confused circumstances, that relate to the conversion of Iberia and Armenia, may be found in Moses of Choren, 1. ii., c. 78-89.

CHAP. of war and commerce might indeed diffuse an
 XV. imperfect knowledge of the gospel among the
 tribes of Caledonia,⁴ and among the borderers
 of the Rhine, the Danube, and the Euphrates.⁵
 Beyond the last-mentioned river, Edessa was
 distinguished by a firm and early adherence to
 the faith.⁶ From Edessa, the principles of chris-
 tianity were easily introduced into the Greek
 and Syrian cities which obeyed the successors of
 Artaxerxes; but they do not appear to have
 made any deep impression on the minds of the
 Persians, whose religious system, by the labours
 of a well-disciplined order of priests, had been
 constructed with much more art and solidity
 than the uncertain mythology of Greece and
 Rome.⁷

⁴ According to Tertullian, the christian faith had penetrated into parts of Britain inaccessible to the Roman arms. About a century afterwards, Ossian, the son of Fingal, is said to have disputed, in his extreme old age, with one of the foreign missionaries; and the dispute is still extant, in verse, and in the Erse language. See Mr. Macpherson's Dissertation on the Antiquity of Ossian's Poems, p. 10.

⁵ The Goths, who ravaged Asia in the reign of Gallienus, carried away great numbers of captives, some of whom were christians, and became missionaries. See Tillemont, Memoires Ecclesiast. tom. iv, p. 44.

⁶ The legend of Abgarus, fabulous as it is, affords a decisive proof, that many years before Eusebius wrote his history, the greatest part of the inhabitants of Edessa had embraced christianity. Their rivals, the citizens of Carrhae, adhered, on the contrary, to the cause of pa-
 ganism, as late as the sixth century.

⁷ According to Bardesanes (ap. Euseb. *Præpar. Evangel.*) there were some christians in Persia before the end of the second century. In the time of Constantine (see his Epistle to Sapor. *Vit. l. iv, c. 13*) they composed a flourishing church. Consult Beausobre, *Hist. Critique du Manicheisme*, tom. i, p. 180, and the *Bibliotheca Orientalis* of Assemani.

From this impartial though imperfect survey CHAP. XV. of the progress of christianity, it may perhaps seem probable, that the number of its proselytes General proportion of christians and pagans. has been excessively magnified by fear on the one side, and by devotion on the other. According to the irreproachable testimony of Origen,² the proportion of the faithful was very inconsiderable, when compared with the multitude of an unbelieving world ; but, as we are left without any distinct information, it is impossible to determine, and it is difficult even to conjecture, the real numbers of the primitive christians. The most favourable calculation, however, that can be deduced from the examples of Antioch and of Rome, will not permit us to imagine that more than a twentieth part of the subjects of the empire had enlisted themselves under the banner of the cross before the important conversion of Constantine. But their habits of faith, of zeal, and of union, seemed to multiply their numbers ; and the same causes which contributed to their future increase served to render their actual strength more apparent and more formidable.

Such is the constitution of civil society, that whilst a few persons are distinguished by riches, the first Christians by honours, and by knowledge, the body of the were mean people is condemned to obscurity, ignorance, and ignorant. poverty. The christian religion, which addressed itself to the whole human race, must consequently collect a far greater number of proselytes from the lower than from the superior ranks of life.

² Origen contra Celsum, l. viii, p. 424.

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This innocent and natural circumstance has been improved into a very odious imputation, which seems to be less strenuously denied by the apologists, than it is urged by the adversaries, of the faith; that the new sect of christians was almost entirely composed of the dregs of the populace, of peasants and mechanics, of boys and women, of beggars and slaves, the last of whom might sometimes introduce the missionaries into the rich and noble families to which they belonged. These obscure teachers (such was the charge of malice and infidelity) are as mute in public as they are loquacious and dogmatical in private. Whilst they cautiously avoid the dangerous encounter of philosophers, they mingle with the rude and illiterate crowd, and insinuate themselves into those minds, whom their age, their sex, or their education, has the best disposed to receive the impression of superstitious terrors.²

Some ex-
ceptionswith regard
to learning;

This unsavourable picture, though not devoid of a faint resemblance, betrays, by its dark colouring and distorted features, the pencil of an enemy. As the humble faith of Christ diffused itself through the world, it was embraced by several persons who derived some consequence from the advantages of nature or fortune. Aristides, who presented an eloquent apology to the emperor Hadrian, was an Athenian philosopher.³ Justin Martyr had sought divine knowledge in the schools of Zeno, of Aristotle, of Pythagoras,

² Minucius Felix, c. 8, with Wowerus's notes. Celsus ap. Origen, l. iii, p. 138-142. Julian ap. Cyril. l. vi, p. 206. Edit, Spanheim.

³ Euseb, Hist. Eccles. iv, 8. Hieronym, Epist. 83.

and of Plato, before he fortunately was accosted by the old man, or rather the angel, who turned his attention to the study of the Jewish prophets.^b Clemens of Alexandria had acquired much various reading in the Greek, and Tertullian in the Latin, language. Julius Africanus and Origen possessed a very considerable share of the learning of their times ; and although the style of Cyprian is very different from that of Lactantius, we might almost discover that both those writers had been public teachers of rhetoric. Even the study of philosophy was at length introduced among the christians, but it was not always productive of the most salutary effects ; knowledge was as often the parent of heresy as of devotion ; and the description which was designed for the followers of Artemon may, with equal propriety, be applied to the various sects that resisted the successors of the apostles.

“ They presume to alter the holy scriptures, to
 “ abandon the ancient rule of faith, and to
 “ form their opinions according to the subtle
 “ precepts of logic. The science of the church
 “ is neglected for the study of geometry, and
 “ they lose sight of heaven while they are em-
 “ ployed in measuring the earth. Euclid is per-
 “ petually in their hands. Aristotle and Theo-
 “ phrastus are the objects of their admiration ;
 “ and they express an uncommon reverence for
 “ the works of Galen. Their errors are derived

^b The story is prettily told in Justin's Dialogues. Tillemont (Mem. Ecclesiast. tom. ii, p. 334), who relates it after him, is sure that the old man was a disguised angel.

CHAP. " from the abuse of the arts and sciences of
 XV. " the infidels ; and they corrupt the simplicity
 " of the gospel by the refinements of human
 " reason."^c

with regard to rank and fortune. Nor can it be affirmed with truth, that the advantages of birth and fortune were always separated from the profession of christianity. Several Roman citizens were brought before the tribunal of Pliny, and he soon discovered that a great number of persons of *every order* of men in Bithynia had deserted the religion of their ancestors.^d His unsuspected testimony may, in this instance, obtain more credit than the bold challenge of Tertullian, when he addresses himself to the fears as well as to the humanity of the proconsul of Africa, by assuring him, that if he persists in his cruel intentions, he must decimate Carthage, and that he will find among the guilty many persons of his own rank, senators and matrons of noblest extraction, and the friends or relations of his most intimate friends.^e It appears, however, that about forty years afterwards the emperor Valerian was persuaded of the truth of this assertion, since in one of his rescripts he evidently supposes, that senators, Roman knights, and ladies of quality, were engaged in

^a Eusebius, v, 28. It may be hoped that none, except the heretics, gave occasion to the complaint of Celsus (ap. Origen, l. ii, p. 77), that the christians were perpetually correcting and altering their gospels.

^b Plin. Epist. x, 97. Fuerunt alii similis amentiae, cives Romani Multi enim omnis etatis *omnis ordinis*, utriusque sexus, etiam vocantur in periculum et vocabuntur.

^c Tertullian ad Scapulam. Yet even his rhetoric rises no higher than to claim a tenth part of Carthage.

the christian sect.^f The church still continued to CHAP.
increase its outward splendour as it lost its in- XV.
ternal purity; and, in the reign of Diocletian,
the palace, the courts of justice, and even the
army, concealed a multitude of christians who
endeavoured to reconcile the interests of the
present, with those of a future, life.

And yet these exceptions are either too few in Christiani-
ty most fa-
number, or too recent in time, entirely to re-
move the imputation of ignorance and obscurity received by
the poor
which has been so arrogantly cast on the first and simple
proselytes of christianity. Instead of employing
in our defence the fictions of later ages, it will
be more prudent to convert the occasion of scan-
dal into a subject of edification. Our serious
thoughts will suggest to us, that the apostles
themselves were chosen by Providence among the
fishermen of Galilee, and that the lower we de-
press the temporal condition of the first chris-
tians, the more reason we shall find to admire
their merit and success. It is incumbent on us
diligently to remember, that the kingdom of
heaven was promised to the poor in spirit, and
that minds afflicted by calamity and the contempt
of mankind cheerfully listen to the divine pro-
mise of future happiness; while, on the contrary,
the fortunate are satisfied with the possession of
this world; and the wise abuse in doubt and dis-
pute their vain superiority of reason and know-
ledge.

^f Cyprian, Epist. 79.

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XV.

Rejected by
some emi-
nent men
of the first
and second
centuries.

We stand in need of such reflections to comfort us for the loss of some illustrious characters, which in our eyes might have seemed the most worthy of the heavenly present. The names of Seneca, of the elder and the younger Pliny, of Tacitus, of Plutarch, of Galen, of the slave Epictetus, and of the emperor Marcus Antoninus, adorn the age in which they flourished, and exalt the dignity of human nature. They filled with glory their respective stations, either in active or contemplative life ; their excellent understandings were improved by study ; philosophy had purified their minds from the prejudices of the popular superstition ; and their days were spent in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue. Yet all these sages (it is no less an object of surprise than of concern) overlooked or rejected the perfection of the christian system. Their language or their silence equally discover their contempt for the growing sect, which in their time had diffused itself over the Roman empire. Those among them who condescend to mention the christians consider them only as obstinate and perverse enthusiasts, who exacted an implicit submission to their mysterious doctrines, without being able to produce a single argument that could engage the attention of men of sense and learning.⁵

* Dr. Lardner, in his first and second volumes of Jewish and christian testimonies, collects and illustrates those of Pliny the younger, of Tacitus, of Galen, of Marcus Antoninus, and perhaps of Epictetus (for it is doubtful whether that philosopher means to speak of the christians). The new sect is totally unnoticed by Seneca, the elder Pliny, and Plutarch.

It is at least doubtful whether any of these philosophers perused the apologies which the primitive christians repeatedly published in behalf of themselves and of their religion; but it is much to be lamented that such a cause was not defended by abler advocates. They expose with superfluous wit and eloquence the extravagance of polytheism; they interest our compassion by displaying the innocence and sufferings of their injured brethren. But when they would demonstrate the divine origin of christianity, they insist much more strongly on the predictions which announced, than on the miracles which accompanied, the appearance of the messiah. Their favourite argument might serve to edify a christian or to convert a Jew, since both the one and the other acknowledge the authority of those prophecies, and both are obliged, with devout reverence, to search for their sense and their accomplishment. But this mode of persuasion loses much of its weight and influence, when it is addressed to those who neither understand nor respect the mosaic dispensation and the prophetic style.^h In the unskilful hands of Justin and of the succeeding apologists, the sublime meaning of the Hebrew oracles evaporates in distant types, affected conceits, and cold alle-

CHAP.
XV.
Their ne-
glect of
prophecy,

^h If the famous prophecy of the seventy weeks had been alleged to a Roman philosopher, would he not have replied in the words of Cicero, "Quæ tandem ista auguratio est, annorum potius quam "aut mensium aut dierum?" *De Divinatione*, ii, 30. Observe with what irreverence Lucian (in *Alexandro*, c. 13), and his friend Celsus ap. Origen (l. vii, p. 327), express themselves concerning the Hebrew prophets.

CHAP. XV. gories; and even their authenticity was rendered suspicious to an unenlightened gentile by the mixture of pious forgeries, which, under the names of Orpheus, Hermes, and the Sibyls,¹ were obtruded on him as of equal value with the genuine inspirations of heaven. The adoption of fraud and sophistry in the defence of revelation too often reminds us of the injudicious conduct of those poets who load their *invulnerable* heroes with a useless weight of cumbersome and brittle armour.

and of
miracles.

But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the pagan and philosophic world, to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, daemons were expelled, and the laws of nature were frequently

General silence concerning the darkness of the passion. suspended for the benefit of the church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral or physical govern-

¹ The philosophers, who derided the more ancient predictions of the Sibyls, would easily have detected the Jewish and christian forgeries, which have been so triumphantly quoted by the fathers, from Justin Martyr to Lactantius. When the Sybilline verses had performed their appointed task, they, like the system of the millenium, were quietly laid aside. The christian Sybil had unluckily fixed the ruin of Rome for the year 195, a. u. c. 948.

ment of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth,^k or at least a celebrated province of the Roman empire,^l was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history.^m It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence, of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect.ⁿ Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe. A distinct chapter of Pliny^o is designed for eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration; but he contents himself with describ-

^k The fathers, as they are drawn out in battle array by Dom Calmet (Dissertations sur la Bible, tom. iii, p. 295-308), seem to cover the whole earth with darkness, in which they are followed by most of the moderns.

^l Origen ad Matth. c. 27, and a few modern critics, Beza, Le Cleire, Lardner, &c. are desirous of confining it to the land of Judea.

^m The celebrated passage of Phlegon is now wisely abandoned. When Tertullian assures the pagans that the mention of the prodigy is found in Arcanis (not Archivis) vestris (see his Apology, c. 21), he probably appeals to the Sybilline verses, which relate it exactly in the words of the gospel.

ⁿ Seneca Quæst. Natur. l. 1, 15, vi, 1, vii, 17. Plin. Hist. Natur. l. ii.

^o Plin. Hist. Natur. ii, 30.

CHAP. ing the singular defect of light which followed
XV. the murder of Cæsar, when, during the greatest
part of the year, the orb of the sun appeared pale
and without splendour. This season of obscurity,
which cannot surely be compared with the pre-
ternatural darkness of the passion, had been al-
ready celebrated by most of the poets^p and his-
torians of that memorable age.^q

^p Virgil. Georgic. i, 466. Tibullus, l. i. Eleg. v, ver. 75. Ovid.
Metamorph. xv, 782. Lucan. Pharsal. i, 540. The last of these
poets places this prodigy before the civil war.

^q See a public epistle of M. Antony in Joseph. Antiq. xiv, 12.
Plutarch in Caesar. p. 471. Appian. Bell. Civil. l. iv. Dion Cassius,
l. xiv, p. 431. Julius Obsequens, c. 128. His little treatise is an
abstract of Livy's prodigies.

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The conduct of the Roman government towards the christians, from the reign of Nero to that of Constantine.

IF we seriously consider the purity of the christian religion, the sanctity of its moral precepts, and the innocent, as well as austere, lives of the Christian greater number of those who, during the first ages, embraced the faith of the gospel, we should naturally suppose, that so benevolent a doctrine would have been received with due reverence, even by the unbelieving world; that the learned and the polite, however they might deride the miracles, would have esteemed the virtues, of the new sect; and that the magistrates, instead of persecuting, would have protected, an order of men who yielded the most passive obedience to the laws, though they declined the active cares of war and government. If, on the other hand, we recollect the universal toleration of polytheism, as it was invariably maintained by the faith of the people, the incredulity of philosophers, and the policy of the Roman senate and emperors, we are at a loss to discover what new offence the christians had committed, what new provocation could exasperate the mild indifference of antiquity, and what new motives could urge the Roman princes, who beheld without concern a thousand

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CHAP. forms of religion subsisting in peace under their
XVI. gentle sway, to inflict a severe punishment on
any part of their subjects, who had chosen for
themselves a singular, but an inoffensive, mode
of faith and worship.

The religious policy of the ancient world seems to have assumed a more stern and intolerant character, to oppose the progress of christianity. About fourscore years after the death of Christ, his innocent disciples were punished with death by the sentence of a proconsul of the most amiable and philosophic character, and according to the laws of an emperor distinguished by the wisdom and justice of his general administration. The apologies which were repeatedly addressed to the successors of Trajan are filled with the most pathetic complaints, that the christians who obeyed the dictates, and solicited the liberty, of conscience, were alone, among all the subjects of the Roman empire, excluded from the common benefits of their auspicious government. The deaths of a few eminent martyrs have been recorded with care; and from the time that christianity was invested with the supreme power, the governors of the church have been no less diligently employed in displaying the cruelty, than in imitating the conduct, of their pagan adversaries. To separate (if it be possible) a few authentic, as well as interesting, facts from an undigested mass of fiction and error, and to relate, in a clear and rational manner, the causes, the extent, the duration, and the most import-

ant circumstances, of the persecutions to which CHAP.
the first christians were exposed, is the design XVI.
of the present chapter.

The sectaries of a persecuted religion, de-
pressed by fear, animated with resentment, and <sup>Inquiry
into their
motives.</sup> perhaps heated by enthusiasm, are seldom in a
proper temper of mind calmly to investigate, or
candidly to appreciate, the motives of their en-
emies, which often escape the impartial and dis-
cerning view even of those who are placed at a
secure distance from the flames of persecution.
A reason has been assigned for the conduct of
the emperors towards the primitive christians,
which may appear the more specious and pro-
bable, as it is drawn from the acknowledged
genius of polytheism. It has already been ob-
served, that the religious concord of the world
was principally supported by the implicit assent
and reverence which the nations of antiquity
expressed for their respective traditions and ce-
remonies. It might therefore be expected, that
they would unite, with indignation, against any
sect of people which should separate itself from
the communion of mankind, and, claiming the
exclusive possession of divine knowledge, should
disdain every form of worship except its own,
as impious and idolatrous. The rights of tol-
eration were held by mutual indulgence: they
were justly forfeited by a refusal of the accus-
tomed tribute. As the payment of this tribute
was inflexibly refused by the Jews, and by them
alone, the consideration of the treatment which

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they experienced from the Roman magistrates will serve to explain how far these speculations are justified by facts, and will lead us to discover the true causes of the persecution of christianity.

Rebellious
spirit of
the Jews.

Without repeating what has been already mentioned, of the reverence of the Roman princes and governors for the temple of Jerusalem, we shall only observe, that the destruction of the temple and city was accompanied and followed by every circumstance that could exasperate the minds of the conquerors, and authorize religious persecution by the most specious arguments of political justice, and the public safety. From the reign of Nero to that of Antoninus Pius, the Jews discovered a fierce impatience of the dominion of Rome, which repeatedly broke out in the most furious massacres and insurrections. Humanity is shocked at the recital of the horrid cruelties which they committed in the cities of Egypt, of Cyprus, and of Cyrene, where they dwelt in treacherous friendship with the unsuspecting natives;* and we are tempted to applaud the severe retaliation which was exercised by the arms of the legions against a race of fanatics, whose dire and credulous superstition seemed to render them the implacable enemies, not only of

* In Cyrene they massacred 220,000 Greeks; in Cyprus, 240,000; in Egypt, a very great multitude. Many of these unhappy victims were sawed asunder, according to a precedent to which David had given the sanction of his example. The victorious Jews devoured the flesh, licked up the blood, and twisted the entrails, like a girdle, round their bodies. See Dion. Cassius, l. lxviii, p. 1145.

the Roman government, but of humankind.^b The enthusiasm of the Jews was supported by the opinion that it was unlawful for them to pay taxes to an idolatrous master; and by the flattering promise which they derived from their ancient oracles, that a conquering messiah would soon arise, destined to break their fetters, and to invest the favourites of heaven with the empire of the earth. It was by announcing himself as their long-expected deliverer, and by calling on all the descendants of Abraham to assert the hope of Israel, that the famous Barchochebas collected a formidable army, with which he resisted during two years the power of the emperor Hadrian.^c

Notwithstanding these repeated provocations, ^{Toleration} the resentment of the Roman princes expired ^{of the} ^{Jewish re-} ^{ligion.} after the victory; nor were their apprehensions continued beyond the period of war and danger. By the general indulgence of polytheism, and by the mild temper of Antoninus Pius, the Jews were restored to their ancient privileges, and once more obtained the permission of circumcising their children, with the easy restraint, that they should never confer on any foreign proselyte

^b Without repeating the well-known narratives of Josephus, we may learn from Dion (l. Ixix, p. 1162), that in Hadrian's war 580,000 Jews were cut off by the sword, besides an infinite number which perished by famine, by disease, and by fire.

^c For the sect of the zealots, see Busnage, *Histoire de Juifs*, l. i. c. 17; for the characters of the messiah, according to the Rabbis, l. v. c. 11, 12, 13; for the actions of Barchochebas, l. vii, c. 12.

CHAP. that distinguishing mark of the Hebrew race*.
 XVI. The numerous remains of that people, though
 they were still excluded from the precincts of
 Jerusalem, were permitted to form and to main-
 tain considerable establishments both in Italy and
 in the provinces, to acquire the freedom of Rome,
 to enjoy municipal honours, and to obtain at the
 same time an exemption from the burdensome
 and expensive offices of society. The modera-
 tion or the contempt of the Romans gave a legal
 sanction to the form of ecclesiastical police which
 was instituted by the vanquished sect. The pa-
 triarch, who had fixed his residence at Tiberias,
 was empowered to appoint his subordinate min-
 isters and apostles to exercise a domestic juris-
 diction, and to receive from his dispersed bre-
 thren an annual contribution*. New synagogues
 were frequently erected in the principal cities of
 the empire; and the sabbaths, the fasts, and the
 festivals, which were either commanded by the
 mosaic law, or enjoined by the traditions of the
 rabbis, were celebrated in the most solemn and
 public manner*. Such gentle treatment insen-
 sibly assuaged the stern temper of the Jews.
 Awakened from their dream of prophecy and

a It is to Modestinus, a Roman lawyer (l. vi, regular.), that we are indebted for a distinct knowledge of the edict of Antoninus. See Causaubon ad Hist. August. p. 27.

* See Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. iii, c. 2, 3. The office of pa-
 triarch was suppressed by Theodosius the younger.

* We need only mention the purim, or deliverance of the Jews from
 the rage of Haman, which, till the reign of Theodosius, was cele-
 brated with insolent triumph and riotous intemperance. Basnage,
Hist. des Juifs, l. vi, c. 17, l. viii, c. 6.

conquest, they assumed the behaviour of peaceable and industrious subjects. Their irreconcileable CHAP.
XVI. hatred of mankind, instead of flaming out in acts of blood and violence, evaporated in less dangerous gratifications. They embraced every opportunity of over-reaching the idolaters in trade; and they pronounced secret and ambiguous imprecations against the haughty kingdom of Edom.^s

Since the Jews, who rejected with abhorrence the deities adored by their sovereign and by their fellow-subjects, enjoyed, however, the free exercise of their unsocial religion, there must have existed some other cause, which exposed the disciples of Christ to those severities from which the posterity of Abraham was exempt. The difference between them is simple and obvious; but, according to the sentiments of antiquity, it was of the highest importance. The Jews were a *nation*; the christians were a *sect*: and if it was natural for every community to respect the sacred institutions of their neighbours, it was incumbent on them to persevere in those of their ancestors. The voice of oracles, the precepts of philosophers, and the authority of the laws, unanimously enforced this national obligation. By their lofty claim of superior sanctity, the Jews might provoke the polytheists to consider them

The Jews
were a
people
which fol-
lowed, the
christians a
sect which
deserted,
the religion
of their
fathers.

^s According to the false Josephus, Tsepho, the grandson of Esau, conducted into Italy the army of Æneas king of Carthage. Another colony of Idumæans, flying from the sword of David, took refuge in the dominions of Romulus. For these, or for other reasons of equal weight, the name of Edom was applied by the Jews to the Roman empire.

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as an odious and impure race. By disdaining the intercourse of other nations they might deserve their contempt. The laws of Moses might be for the most part frivolous or absurd ; yet since they had been received during many ages by a large society, his followers were justified by the example of mankind ; and it was universally acknowledged that they had a right to practise what it would have been criminal in them to neglect. But this principle, which protected the Jewish synagogue, afforded not any favour or security to the primitive church. By embracing the faith of the gospel, the christians incurred the supposed guilt of an unnatural and unpardonable offence. They dissolved the sacred ties of custom and education, violated the religious institutions of their country, and presumptuously despised whatever their fathers had believed as true, or had reverenced as sacred. Nor was this apostacy (if we may use the expression) merely of a partial or local kind ; since the pious deserter who withdrew himself from the temples of Egypt or Syria would equally disdain to seek an asylum in those of Athens or Carthage. Every christian rejected with contempt the superstitions of his family, his city, and his province. The whole body of christians unanimously refused to hold any communion with the gods of Rome, of the empire, and of mankind. It was in vain that the oppressed believer asserted the inalienable rights of conscience and private judgment. Though his situation might excite the pity, his

arguments could never reach the understanding, either of the philosophic or of the believing part of the pagan world. To their apprehensions, it was no less a matter of surprise, that any individuals should entertain scruples against complying with the established mode of worship, than if they had conceived a sudden abhorrence to the manners, the dress, or the language of their native country.^h

The surprise of the pagans was soon succeeded by resentment; and the most pious of men were exposed to the unjust but dangerous imputation of impiety. Malice and prejudice concurred in representing the christians as a society of atheists, who, by the most daring attack on the religious constitution of the empire, had merited the severest animadversion of the civil magistrate. They had separated themselves (they gloried in the confession) from every mode of superstition which was received in any part of the globe by the various temper of polytheism; but it was not altogether so evident what deity, or what form of worship, they had substituted to the gods and temples of antiquity. The pure and sublime idea which they entertained of the Supreme Being escaped the gross conception of the pagan multitude, who were at a loss to discover

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^h From the arguments of Celsus, as they are represented and refuted by Origen (l. v. p. 247-259), we may clearly discover the distinction that was made between the Jewish *people* and the christian *sect*. See in the Dialogue of Minucius Felix (c. 5, 6) a fair and not inelegant description of the popular sentiments, with regard to the desecration of the established worship.

CHAP. a spiritual and solitary god, that was neither represented under any corporeal figure or visible symbol, nor was adored with the accustomed pomp of libations and festivals, of altars and sacrifices.¹ The sages of Greece and Rome, who had elevated their minds to the contemplation of the existence and attributes of the First Cause, were induced by reason or by vanity to reserve for themselves and their chosen disciples the privilege of this philosophical devotion.² They were far from admitting the prejudices of mankind as the standard of truth; but they considered them as flowing from the original disposition of human nature; and they supposed that any popular mode of faith and worship which presumed to disclaim the assistance of the senses would, in proportion as it receded from superstition, find itself incapable of restraining the wanderings of the fancy, and the visions of fanaticism. The careless glance which men of wit and learning condescended to cast on the christian revelation served only to confirm their hasty opinion, and to persuade them that the principle, which they might have revered, of the divine unity, was defaced by the wild enthusiasm,

¹ Cur nullas aras habent? templa nulla? nulla nota simulaera?
.... Unde autem, vel quis ille, aut ubi, Deus unicus, solitarius, destitutus? Minucius Fœlix, c. 10. The pagan interlocutor goes on to make a distinction in favour of the Jews, who had once a temple, altars, victims, &c.

² It is difficult (says Plato) to attain, and dangerous to publish, the knowledge of the true God. See the *Theologie des Philosophes*, in the Abbé d'Olivet's French translation of *Tully de Naturâ Deorum*, tom. i, p. 275.

and annihilated by the airy speculations, of the new sectaries. The author of a celebrated dialogue, which has been attributed to Lucian, whilst he affects to treat the mysterious subject of the trinity in a style of ridicule and contempt, betrays his own ignorance of the weakness of human reason, and of the inscrutable nature of the divine perfections.¹

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It might appear less surprising that the founder of christianity should not only be revered by his disciples as a sage and a prophet, but that he should be adored as a god. The polytheists were disposed to adopt every article of faith, which seemed to offer any resemblance, however distant or imperfect, with the popular mythology; and the legends of Bacchus, of Hercules, and of Æsculapius, had, in some measure, prepared their imagination for the appearance of the son of God under a human form.^m But they were astonished that the christians should abandon the temples of those ancient heroes, who, in the

¹ The author of the Philopatris perpetually treats the christians as a company of dreaming enthusiasts, *δαιμονοι, αιθροι, αιθρεστεροι, αιροαντεστοι*, &c. and in one place manifestly alludes to the vision in which St. Paul was transported to the third heaven. In another place, Triphon, who personates a christian, after deriding the gods of paganism, proposes a mysterious oath,

Τύμαιοδολα θεον, μηγαν, αμφρον, θεανικα,
Τιον πατερο, πνευμα ει πατερο εκποσιομενον

Εν επ τριαν, και ει ει πατερο τρια.

Αριθμεσιν με διδασκεις (is the profane answer of Critias), και ορη πατερο ει
αριθμητικην ει οιδα για τι λεγεις ει τρια ο!

^m According to Justin Martyr (Apolog. Major, c. 70-85), the daemon, who had gained some imperfect knowledge of the prophecies, purposely contrived this resemblance, which might deter, though by different means, both the people and the philosophers from embracing the faith of Christ.

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infancy of the world, had invented arts, instituted laws, and vanquished the tyrants or monsters who infested the earth, in order to choose for the exclusive object of their religious worship, an obscure teacher, who, in a recent age, and among a barbarous people, had fallen a sacrifice either to the malice of his own countrymen, or to the jealousy of the Roman government. The pagan multitude, reserving their gratitude for temporal benefits alone, rejected the inestimable present of life and immortality, which was offered to mankind by Jesus of Nazareth. His mild constancy in the midst of cruel and voluntary sufferings, his universal benevolence, and the sublime simplicity of his actions and character, were insufficient, in the opinion of those carnal men, to compensate for the want of fame, of empire, and of success; and whilst they refused to acknowledge his stupendous triumph over the powers of darkness and of the grave, they misrepresented, or they insulted, the equivocal birth, wandering life, and ignominious death, of the divine author of christianity.ⁿ

The union
and assem-
blies of the
christians
considered
as a dan-
gerous
conspiracy.

The personal guilt which every christian had contracted, in thus preferring his private sentiment to the national religion, was aggravated in a very high degree by the number and union of the criminals. It is well known, and has been already observed, that Roman policy viewed with

ⁿ In the first and second books of Origen, Celsus treats the birth and character of our Saviour with the most impious contempt. The orator Libanius praises Porphyry and Julian for confuting the folly of a sect, which styled a dead man of Palestine, God, and the son of God. Socrates, Hist. Ecclesiast. iii, 23.

the utmost jealousy and distrust any association among its subjects; and that the privileges of private corporations, though formed for the most harmless or beneficial purposes, were bestowed with a very sparing hand.^o The religious assemblies of the christians, who had separated themselves from the public worship, appeared of a much less innocent nature; they were illegal in their principle, and in their consequences might become dangerous; nor were the emperors conscious that they violated the laws of justice, when, for the peace of society, they prohibited those secret and sometimes nocturnal meetings.^p The pious disobedience of the christians made their conduct, or perhaps their designs, appear in a much more serious and criminal light; and the Roman princes, who might perhaps have suffered themselves to be disarmed by a ready submission, deeming their honour concerned in the execution of their commands, sometimes attempted, by rigorous punishments, to subdue this independent spirit, which boldly acknowledged an authority superior to that of the magistrate. The extent and duration of this spiritual conspiracy seemed to render it every day more deserving of his animadversion. We have already seen that the active and successful zeal of

^o The emperor Trajan refused to incorporate a company of 150 firemen, for the use of the city of Nicomedia. He disliked all associations. See Plin. Epist. x, 42, 43.

^p The proconsul Pliny had published a general edict against unlawful meetings. The prudence of the christians suspended their Agapæ; but it was impossible for them to omit the exercise of public worship.

CHAP. the christians had insensibly diffused them
 XVI. through every province, and almost every city of
 the empire. The new converts seemed to renounce their family and country, that they might connect themselves in an indissoluble band of union with a peculiar society, which every where assumed a different character from the rest of mankind. Their gloomy and austere aspect, their abhorrence of the common business and pleasures of life, and their frequent predictions of impending calamities,⁴ inspired the pagans with the apprehension of some danger, which would arise from the new sect, the more alarming as it was the more obscure. "Whatever," says Pliny, "may be the principle of their conduct, " their inflexible obstinacy appeared deserving "of punishment."⁵

<sup>Their manners calum-
niated.</sup> The precautions with which the disciples of Christ performed the offices of religion were at first dictated by fear and necessity; but they were continued from choice. By imitating the awful secrecy which reigned in the Eleusinian mysteries, the christians had flattered themselves that they should render their sacred institutions more respectable in the eyes of the pagan world.⁶ But

⁴ As the prophecies of the antichrist, approaching conflagration, &c. provoked those pagans whom they did not convert, they were mentioned with caution and reserve; and the montanists were censured for disclosing too freely the dangerous secret. See Mosheim, p. 413.

⁵ *Neque enim dubitabam, quodcumque esset quod faterentur* (such are the words of Pliny), *pervicaciam certe et inflexiblem obstinationem debere puniri.*

⁶ See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. i, p. 101, and Spanheim, *Remarques sur les Césars de Julien*, p. 468, &c.

the event, as it often happens to the operations of subtile policy, deceived their wishes and their expectations. It was concluded, that they only concealed what they would have blushed to disclose. Their mistaken prudence afforded an opportunity for malice to invent, and for suspicious credulity to believe, the horrid tales which described the christians as the most wicked of human kind, who practised in their dark recesses every abomination that a depraved fancy could suggest, and who solicited the favour of their unknown God by the sacrifice of every moral virtue. There were many who pretended to confess or to relate the ceremonies of this abhorred society. It was asserted, “ that a new-born infant, entirely covered over with flour, was presented, like some mystic symbol of initiation, to the knife of the proselyte, who unknowingly inflicted many a secret and mortal wound on the innocent victim of his error ; that as soon as the cruel deed was perpetrated, the sectaries drank up the blood, greedily tore asunder the quivering members, and pledged themselves to eternal secrecy, by a mutual consciousness of guilt. It was as confidently affirmed, that this inhuman sacrifice was succeeded by a suitable entertainment, in which intemperance served as a provocative to brutal lust ; till, at the appointed moment, the lights were suddenly extinguished, shame was banished, nature was forgotten ; and, as accident might direct, the darkness of the night

CHAP. " was polluted by the incestuous commerce of
 XVI. " sisters and brothers, of sons and of mo-
 " thers."¹

Their im-
prudent de-
fence.

But the perusal of the ancient apologies was sufficient to remove even the slightest suspicion from the mind of a candid adversary. The christians, with the intrepid security of innocence, appeal from the voice of rumour to the equity of the magistrates. They acknowledge, that if any proof can be produced of the crimes which calumny has imputed to them, they are worthy of the most severe punishment. They provoke the punishment, and they challenge the proof. At the same time they urge, with equal truth and propriety, that the charge is not less devoid of probability, than it is destitute of evidence; they ask, whether any one can seriously believe that the pure and holy precepts of the gospel, which so frequently restrained the use of the most lawful enjoyments, should inculcate the practice of the most abominable crimes; that a large society should resolve to dishonour itself in the eyes of its own members; and that a great number of persons of either sex, and every age and character, insensible to the fear of death or infamy, should consent to violate those principles which nature and education had imprinted most

¹ See Justin Martyr, *Apolog.* i, 35, ii, 14. Athenagoras in *Legation.* c. 27. Tertullian, *Apolog.* c. 7, 8, 9. Minucius Felix, c. 9, 10, 30, 31. The last of these writers relates the accusation in the most elegant and circumstantial manner. The answer of Tertullian is the boldest and most vigorous.

deeply in their minds.^u Nothing, it should seem, could weaken the force or destroy the effect of so unanswerable a justification, unless it were the injudicious conduct of the apologists themselves, who betrayed the common cause of religion, to gratify their devout hatred to the domestic enemies of the church. It was sometimes faintly insinuated, and sometimes boldly asserted, that the same bloody sacrifices, and the same incestuous festivals, which were so falsely ascribed to the orthodox believers, were in reality celebrated by the marcionites, by the carpocratiens, and by several other sects of the gnostics, who, notwithstanding they might deviate into the paths of heresy, were still actuated by the sentiments of men, and still governed by the precepts of christianity.^x Accusations of a similar kind were retorted upon the church by the schismatics who had departed from its communion,^y and it was confessed on all sides, that

^u In the persecution of Lyons, some gentile slaves were compelled, by the fear of tortures, to accuse their christian master. The church of Lyons, writing to their brethren of Asia, treat the horrid charge with proper indignation and contempt. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. v. 1.

^x See Justin Martyr, Apolog. i. 35. Irenaeus, adv. Haeres. i. 24. Clemens Alexandrin. Stromat. 1. iii, p. 438. Euseb. iv, 8. It would be tedious and disgusting to relate all that the succeeding writers have imagined, all that Epiphanius has received, and all that Tillement has copied. M. de Beausobre (Hist. du Manicheisme, 1. ix, c. 8, 9) has exposed, with great spirit, the disingenuous arts of Augustin and pope Leo 1.

^y When Tertullian became a montanist, he aspersed the morals of the church which he had so resolutely defended. "Sed majoris est

"Agape, quia per hanc adolescentes tui cum sororibus dormiunt,

"appendices

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the most scandalous licentiousness of manners prevailed among great numbers of those who affected the name of christians. A pagan magistrate, who possessed neither leisure nor abilities to discern the almost imperceptible line which divides the orthodox faith from heretical depravity, might easily have imagined that their mutual animosity had extorted the discovery of their common guilt. It was fortunate for the repose, or at least for the reputation, of the first christians, that the magistrates sometimes proceeded with more temper and moderation than is usually consistent with religious zeal, and that they reported, as the impartial result of their judicial inquiry, that the sectaries, who had deserted the established worship, appeared to them sincere in their professions, and blameless in their manners ; however they might incur, by their absurd and excessive superstition, the censure of the laws.*

Idea of the
conduct of
the empe-
rors to-
wards the
christians.

History, which undertakes to record the transactions of the past, for the instruction of future ages, would ill deserve that honourable office, if she condescended to plead the cause of tyrants or to justify the maxims of persecution. It must, however, be acknowledged, that the conduct of the emperors who appeared the least favourable

“ appendices scilicet gulae lascivia et luxuria.” De Jejuniis, c. 17. The 35th canon of the council of Illiberis provides against the scandals which too often polluted the vigils of the church, and disgraced the christian name in the eyes of unbelievers.

* Tertullian (Apolog. c. 2) expatiates on the fair and honourable testimony of Pliny, with much reason, and some declamation.

to the primitive church is by no means so criminal as that of modern sovereigns, who have employed the arm of violence and terror against the religious opinions of any part of their subjects. From their reflections, or even from their own feelings, a Charles v, or a Louis xiv, might have acquired a just knowledge of the rights of conscience, of the obligation of faith, and of the innocence of error. But the princes and magistrates of ancient Rome were strangers to those principles which inspired and authorised the inflexible obstinacy of the christians in the cause of truth ; nor could they themselves discover in their own breasts any motive which would have prompted them to refuse a legal, and as it were a natural, submission to the sacred institutions of their country. The same reason which contributes to alleviate the guilt, must have tended to abate the rigour, of their persecutions. As they were actuated, not by the furious zeal of bigots, but by the temperate policy of legislators, contempt must often have relaxed, and humanity must frequently have suspended the execution of those laws, which they enacted against the humble and obscure followers of Christ. From the general view of their character and motives we might naturally conclude :
i. That a considerable time elapsed before they considered the new sectaries as an object deserving of the attention of government. ii. That in the conviction of any of their subjects who were accused of so very singular a crime, they

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proceeded with caution and reluctance. iii. That they were moderate in the use of punishments; and, iv. That the afflicted church enjoyed many intervals of peace and tranquillity. Notwithstanding the careless indifference which the most copious and the most minute of the pagan writers have shewn to the affairs of the christians,^a it may still be in our power to confirm each of these probable suppositions, by the evidence of authentic facts.

They neglected the christians as a sect of Jews.

i. By the wise dispensation of Providence, a mysterious veil was cast over the infancy of the church, which, till the faith of the christians was matured, and their numbers were multiplied, served to protect them not only from the malice, but even from the knowledge, of the pagan world. The slow and gradual abolition of the mosaic ceremonies afforded a safe and innocent disguise to the more early proselytes of the gospel. As they were far the greater part of the race of Abraham, they were distinguished by the peculiar mark of circumcision, offered up their devotions in the temple of Jerusalem till its final destruction, and received both the law and the prophets as the genuine inspirations of the Deity. The gentile converts, who by a spiritual adoption had been associated to the hope of Israel, were likewise confounded under the

^a In the various compilation of the Augustan History (a part of which was composed under the reign of Constantine), there are not six lines which relate to the christians; nor has the diligence of Xiphilin discovered their name in the large history of Dion Cassius.

garb and appearance of the Jews,^b and as the polytheists paid less regard to articles of faith than to the external worship, the new sect, which carefully concealed, or faintly announced, its future greatness and ambition, was permitted to shelter itself under the general toleration which was granted to an ancient and celebrated people in the Roman empire. It was not long, perhaps, before the Jews themselves, animated with a fiercer zeal and a more jealous faith, perceived the gradual separation of their nazarene brethren from the doctrine of the synagogue; and they would gladly have extinguished the dangerous heresy in the blood of its adherents. But the decrees of heaven had already disarmed their malice; and though they might sometimes exert the licentious privilege of sedition, they no longer possessed the administration of criminal justice; nor did they find it easy to infuse into the calm breast of a Roman magistrate the rancour of their own zeal and prejudice. The provincial governors declared themselves ready to listen to any accusation that might affect the public safety: but as soon as they were informed that it was a question not of facts but of words, a dispute relating only to the interpretation of the Jewish laws and prophesies, they deemed it unworthy of the majesty of Rome seriously to discuss the obscure differences which might arise among a

^b An obscure passage of Suetonius (in Claud. c. 25) may seem to offer a proof how strangely the Jews and christians of Rome were confounded with each other.

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barbarous and superstitious people. The innocence of the first christians was protected by ignorance and contempt; and the tribunal of the pagan magistrate often proved their most assured refuge against the fury of the synagogue.^c If indeed we were disposed to adopt the traditions of a too credulous antiquity, we might relate the distant peregrinations, the wonderful achievements, and the various deaths, of the twelve apostles; but a more accurate inquiry will induce us to doubt, whether any of those persons who had been witnesses to the miracles of Christ were permitted, beyond the limits of Palestine, to seal with their blood the truth of their testimony.^d From the ordinary term of human life, it may very naturally be presumed that most of them were deceased before the discontent of the Jews broke out into that furious war, which was terminated only by the ruin of Jerusalem. During a long period, from the death of Christ to that memorable rebellion, we cannot discover any traces of Roman intolerance, unless they are to be found in the sudden, the transient, but the cruel, persecution which

^c See in the eighteenth and twenty-fifth chapters of the Acts of the Apostles the behaviour of Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, and of Festus, procurator of Judea.

^d In the time of Tertullian and Clemens of Alexandria, the glory of martyrdom was confined to St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James. It was gradually bestowed on the rest of the apostles, by the more recent Greeks, who prudently selected for the theatre of their preaching and sufferings some remote country beyond the limits of the Roman empire. See Mosheim, p. 81, and Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. i, part iii.

was exercised by Nero against the christians of the capital, thirty-five years after the former, and only two years before the latter, of those great events. The character of the philosophic historian, to whom we are principally indebted for the knowledge of this singular transaction, would alone be sufficient to recommend it to our most attentive consideration.

In the tenth year of the reign of Nero, the capital of the empire was afflicted by a fire which raged beyond the memory or example of former ages.^e The monuments of Grecian art and of Roman virtue, the trophies of the Punic and Gallic wars, the most holy temples, and the most splendid palaces, were involved in one common destruction. Of the fourteen regions or quarters into which Rome was divided, four only subsisted entire, three were levelled with the ground, and the remaining seven, which had experienced the fury of the flames, displayed a melancholy prospect of ruin and desolation. The vigilance of government appears not to have neglected any of the precautions which might alleviate the sense of so dreadful a calamity. The imperial gardens were thrown open to the distressed multitude, temporary buildings were erected for their accommodation, and a plentiful supply of corn and provisions was distributed at

^e Tacit. Annal. xv, 38-44. Sueton. in Nero, c. 39. Dion Cassius, l. lxii, p. 1014. Orosius, vii, 7.

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CHAP. a very moderate price.^f The most generous
XVI. policy seemed to have dictated the edicts which
regulated the disposition of the streets and the
construction of private houses ; and as it usually
happens, in an age of prosperity, the conflagration
of Rome, in the course of a few years, pro-
duced a new city, more regular and more beau-
tiful than the former. But all the prudence and
humanity affected by Nero on this occasion were
insufficient to preserve him from the popular
suspicion. Every crime might be imputed to
the assassin of his wife and mother ; nor could
the prince, who prostituted his person and dig-
nity on the theatre, be deemed incapable of the
most extravagant folly. The voice of rumour
accused the emperor as the incendiary of his own
capital ; and as the most incredible stories are
the best adapted to the genius of an enraged
people, it was gravely reported, and firmly be-
lieved, that Nero, enjoying the calamity which
he had occasioned, amused himself with singing
to his lyre the destruction of ancient Troy.^g To divert a suspicion which the power of des-
potism was unable to suppress, the emperor re-
solved to substitute in his own place some ficti-
tious criminals. " With this view (continues

^f The price of wheat (probably of the *modius*) was reduced as low as *terni nummi* ; which would be equivalent to about fifteen shillings the English quarter.

^g We may observe, that the rumour is mentioned by Tacitus with a very becoming distrust and hesitation, whilst it is greedily transcribed by Suetonius, and solemnly confirmed by Dion.

" Tacitus) he inflicted the most exquisite tor- CHAP.
 " tures on those men, who, under the vulgar XVI.
 " appellation of christians, were already branded
 " with deserved infamy. They deriyed their
 " name and origin from Christ, who, in the
 " reign of Tiberius, had suffered death, by the
 " sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate. Cruel pu-
 " nishment of the
 " christians as the in-
 " cendiaries
 " h of the
 " city.
 " For a while this dire superstition was checked;
 " but it again burst forth, and not only spread
 " itself over Judæa, the first seat of this mis-
 " chievous sect, but was even introduced into
 " Rome, the common asylum which receives
 " and protects whatever is impure, whatever
 " is atrocious. The confessions of those who
 " were seized discovered a great multitude of
 " their accomplices, and they were all convicted,
 " not so much for the crime of setting fire to
 " the city, as for their hatred of human kind.¹

^a This testimony is alone sufficient to expose the anachronism of the Jews, who place the birth of Christ near a century sooner, (Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. v. c. 14, 15). We may learn from Josephus (*Antiquitat. xviii.*, 3), that the procuratorship of Pilate corresponded with the last ten years of Tiberius, a. d. 27-37. As to the particular time of the death of Christ, a very early tradition fixed it to the 25th of March, a. d. 29, under the consulship of the two Gemini (Tertullian *adv. Judæos*, c. 8). This date, which is adopted by Pagi, cardinal Norris, and Le Clerc, seems at least as probable as the vulgar era, which is placed (I know not from what conjectures) four years later.

ⁱ *Odio humani generis convicti.* These words may either signify the hatred of mankind towards the christians, or the hatred of the christians towards mankind. I have preferred the latter sense, as the most agreeable to the stile of Tacitus, and to the popular error, of which a precept of the gospel (see Luke xiv. 26) had been, perhaps, the

CHAP. " They died in torments, and their torments
 XVI. " were embittered by insult and derision. Some
 " were nailed on crosses; others sewn up in the
 " skins of wild beasts, and exposed to the fury
 " of dogs: others again, smeared over with
 " combustible materials, were used as torches
 " to illuminate the darkness of the night. The
 " gardens of Nero were destined for the melan-
 " choly spectacle, which was accompanied with
 " a horse race, and honoured with the presence
 " of the emperor, who mingled with the popu-
 " lace in the dress and attitude of a charioteer.
 " The guilt of the christians deserved indeed
 " the most exemplary punishment; but the pub-
 " lic abhorrence was changed into commisera-
 " tion, from the opinion that those unhappy
 " wretches were sacrificed, not so much to the
 " public welfare, as to the cruelty of a jealous
 " tyrant."^k Those who survey with a curious
 eye the revolutions of mankind may observe,
 that the gardens and circus of Nero on the Va-
 tican, which were polluted with the blood of
 the first christians, have been rendered still more
 famous, by the triumph and by the abuse of the

innocent occasion. My interpretation is justified by the authority of Lipsius; of the Italian, the French, and the English, translators of Tacitus; of Mosheim (p. 102), of Le Clerc (Historia Ecclesiast. p. 427), of D. Lardner (Testimonies, vol. i, p. 345), and of the bishop of Gloucester (Divine Legation, vol. iii, p. 38). But as the word *con-
 victi* does not unite very happily with the rest of the sentence, James Gronovius has preferred the reading of *conjuncti*, which is authorised
 by the valuable ms. of Florence.

^k Tacit. Annal. xv, 44.

persecuted religion. On the same spot,¹ a temple, which far surpasses the ancient glories of the capitol, has since been erected by the christian pontiffs; who, deriving their claim of universal dominion from an humble fisherman of Galilee, have succeeded to the throne of the Cæsars, given laws to the barbarian conquerors of Rome, and extended their spiritual jurisdiction from the coast of the Baltic to the shores of the Pacific ocean.

But it would be improper to dismiss this account of Nero's persecution, till we have made some observations, that may serve to remove the difficulties with which it is perplexed, and to throw some light on the subsequent history of the church.

1. The most sceptical criticism is obliged to respect the truth of this extraordinary fact, and the integrity of this celebrated passage of Tacitus. The former is confirmed by the diligent and accurate Suetonius, who mentions the punishment which Nero inflicted on the christians, a sect of men who had embraced a new and criminal superstition.^m The latter may be proved by the consent of the most ancient manuscripts; by the inimitable character of the style of Tacitus; by his reputation, which

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Remarks
on the pas-
sage of Ta-
citus rela-
tive to the
persecu-
tion of the
christians
by Nero.

¹ Nardina Roma Antica, p. 487. Donatus de Româ Antiquâ, l. iii, p. 449.

^m Sueton. in Nerone, c. 16. The epithet of *malefica*, which some sagacious commentators have translated *magical*, is considered by the more rational Mosheim as only synonymous to the *extiabilis* of Tacitus.

CHAP. XVI. guarded his text from the interpolations of pious fraud; and by the purport of his narration, which accused the first christians of the most atrocious crimes, without insinuating that they possessed any miraculous or even magical powers above the rest of mankind.ⁿ 2. Notwithstanding it is probable that Tacitus was born some years before the fire of Rome,^o he could derive only from reading and conversation the knowledge of an event which happened during his infancy. Before he gave himself to the public, he calmly waited till his genius had attained its full maturity; and he was more than forty years of age, when a grateful regard for the memory of the virtuous Agricola extorted from him the most early of those historical compositions which will delight and instruct the most distant posterity. After making a trial of his strength in the life of Agricola and the description of Germany, he conceived, and at length executed, a

ⁿ The passage concerning Jesus Christ, which was inserted into the text of Josephus, between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius, may furnish an example of no vulgar forgery. The accomplishment of the prophecies, the virtues, miracles, and resurrection, of Jesus, are distinctly related. Josephus acknowledges that he was the messiah, and hesitates whether he should call him a man. If any doubt can still remain concerning this celebrated passage, the reader may examine the pointed objections of Le Fevre (Havercamp, Joseph. tom. ii, p. 267-273), the laboured answers of Daubuz (p. 187-232), and the masterly reply (Bibliothéque Ancienne et Moderne, tom. vii, p. 237-288) of an anonymous critic, whom I believe to have been the learned Abbé de Longuerue.

^o See the lives of Tacitus by Lipsius and the Abbé de la Bléterie, Dictionnaire de Bayle à l'article *Tacite*, and Fabricius, Biblioth. Latin, tom. ii, p. 386. edit. Ernest.

more arduous work; the history of Rome, in CHAP. thirty books, from the fall of Nero to the accession of Nerva. The administration of Nerva introduced an age of justice and prosperity, which Tacitus had destined for the occupation of his old age;³ but when he took a nearer view of his subject, judging, perhaps, that it was a more honourable or a less invidious office, to record the vices of past tyrants, than to celebrate the virtues of a reigning monarch, he chose rather to relate, under the form of annals, the actions of the four immediate successors of Augustus. To collect, to dispose, and to adorn, a series of fourscore years, in an immortal work, every sentence of which is pregnant with the deepest observations and the most lively images, was an undertaking sufficient to exercise the genius of Tacitus himself during the greatest part of his life. In the last years of the reign of Trajan, whilst the victorious monarch extended the power of Rome beyond its ancient limits, the historian was describing, in the second and fourth books of his annals, the tyranny of Tiberius;⁴ and the emperor Hadrian must have succeeded to the throne, before Tacitus, in the regular prosecution of his work, could relate the fire of the capital, and the cruelty of Nero towards the unfortunate christians. At the distance of sixty years, it was the duty of the annalist to adopt the narratives of contemporaries; but it was na-

³ Principatum Divi Nerva, et imperium Trajani, uberiorem securioremque materiam senectuti seposui. Tacit. Hist. i.

⁴ See Tacit. Annal. ii, 61, iv, 4.

CHAP. tural for the philosopher to indulge himself in
XVI. the description of the origin, the progress, and
the character, of the new sect, not so much ac-
cording to the knowledge or prejudices of the
age of Nero, as according to those of the time
of Hadrian. 3. Tacitus very frequently trusts
to the curiosity or reflection of his readers to
supply those intermediate circumstances and
ideas, which, in his extreme conciseness, he has
thought proper to suppress. We may, therefore,
presume to imagine some probable cause which
could direct the cruelty of Nero against the
christians of Rome, whose obscurity, as well as
innocence, should have shielded them from his
indignation, and even from his notice. The
Jews, who were numerous in the capital, and
oppressed in their own country, were a much
fitter object for the suspicions of the emperor
and of the people; nor did it seem unlikely that
a vanquished nation, who already discovered
their abhorrence of the Roman yoke, might
have recourse to the most atrocious means of
gratifying their implacable revenge. But the
Jews possessed very powerful advocates in the
palace, and even in the heart, of the tyrant; his
wife and mistress, the beautiful Poppea, and a
favourite player of the race of Abraham, who
had already employed their intercession in behalf
of the obnoxious people.⁷ In their room it

⁷ The player's name was Aliturus. Through the same channel, Josephus (de Vitâ sua, c. 3), about two years before, had obtained the pardon and release of some Jewish priests who were prisoners at Rome.

was necessary to offer some other victims; and it might easily be suggested that, although the genuine followers of Moses were innocent of the fire of Rome, there had arisen among them a new and pernicious sect of *galilæans*, which was capable of the most horrid crimes. Under the appellation of *galilæans*, two distinctions of men were confounded, the most opposite to each other in their manners and principles; the disciples who had embraced the faith of Jesus of Nazareth,^{*} and the zealots who had followed the standard of Judas the Gaulonite.[†] The former were the friends, the latter were the enemies, of humankind; and the only resemblance between them consisted in the same inflexible constancy, which, in the defence of their cause, rendered them insensible of death and tortures. The followers of Judas, who impelled their countrymen into rebellion, were soon buried under the ruins of Jerusalem; whilst those of Jesus, known by the more celebrated name of christians, diffused themselves over the Roman empire. How natural was it for Tacitus, in the time of Hadrian, to appropriate to the christians

* The learned Dr. Lardner (Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, vol. ii, p. 102, 103) has proved that the name of *galilæans* was a very ancient, and perhaps the primitive, appellation of the christians.

† Joseph. Antiquitat. xviii, 1, 2. Tillemont, Ruine des Juifs; p. 742. The sons of Judas were crucified in the time of Claudius. His grandson Eleazar, after Jerusalem was taken, defended a strong fortress with 960 of his most desperate followers. When the battering ram had made a breach, they turned their swords against their wives, their children, and at length against their own breasts. They died to the last man.

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the guilt and the sufferings, which he might, with far greater truth and justice, have attributed to a sect whose odious memory was almost extinguished ! 4. Whatever opinion may be entertained of this conjecture (for it is no more than a conjecture), it is evident that the effect, as well as the cause, of Nero's persecution, was confined to the walls of Rome ;^u that the religious tenets of the galilæans, or christians, were never made a subject of punishment, or even of inquiry ; and that, as the idea of their sufferings was, for a long time, connected with the idea of cruelty and injustice, the moderation of succeeding princes inclined them to spare a sect, oppressed by a tyrant, whose rage had been usually directed against virtue and innocence.

Oppression of the Jews and christians by Domitian. It is somewhat remarkable, that the flames of war consumed almost at the same time the temple of Jerusalem and the capitol of Rome ;^x and it appears no less singular, that the tribute which devotion had destined to the former, should have been converted by the power of an assaulting victor to restore and adorn the splen-

^u See Dodwell. *Paucitat. Mart. I. xiii.* The Spanish Inscription in Gruter, p. 238, No. 9, is a manifest and acknowledged forgery, contrived by that noted imposter Cyriacus of Ancona, to flatter the pride and prejudices of the Spaniards. See Ferreras, *Histoire d'Espagne*, tom. i, p. 192.

^x The capitol was burnt during the civil war between Vitellius and Vespasian, the 19th of December, A. D. 69. On the tenth of August, A. D. 70, the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed by the hands of the Jews themselves, rather than by those of the Romans.

dour of the latter.^y The emperors levied a general capitation tax on the Jewish people; and although the sum assessed on the head of each individual was inconsiderable, the use for which it was designed, and the severity with which it was exacted, were considered as an intolerable grievance.^z Since the officers of the revenue extended their unjust claim to many persons who were strangers to the blood or religion of the Jews, it was impossible that the christians, who had so often sheltered themselves under the shade of the synagogue, should now escape this rapacious persecution. Anxious as they were to avoid the slightest infection of idolatry, their conscience forbade them to contribute to the honour of that dæmon who had assumed the character of the capitoline Jupiter. As a very numerous though declining party among the christians still adhered to the law of Moses, their efforts to dissemble their Jewish origin were detected by the decisive test of circumcision;^a nor were the Roman magistrates at leisure to inquire into the difference of their

^y The new capitol was dedicated by Domitian. Sueton. in Domitian. c. 5. Plutarch, in Poplicola, tom. i. p. 230, edit. Bryan. The gilding alone cost 12,000 talents (above two millions and a half). It was the opinion of Martial (l. ix, epigram 3) that if the emperor had called in his debts, Jupiter himself, even though he had made a general auction of Olympus, would have been unable to pay two shillings in the pound.

^z With regard to the tribute, see Dion Cassius, l. lxxvi, p. 1082, with Reimarus's notes. Spanheim, de Usu Numismatum, tom. ii, p. 571, and Bashage, Histoire des Juifs, l. vii, c. 2.

^a Suetonius (in Domitian. c. 12) had seen an old man of ninety publicly examined before the procurator's tribunal. This is what Martial calls, *Mentula tributis damnata*.

CHAP. religious tenets. Among the christians who
XVI. were brought before the tribunal of the emperor, or, as it seems more probable, before that
of the procurator of Judæa, two persons are
said to have appeared, distinguished by their ex-
traction, which was more truly noble than that
of the greatest monarchs. These were the grand-
sons of St. Jude the apostle, who himself was the
brother of Jesus Christ.^b Their natural pre-
tensions to the throne of David might perhaps
attract the respect of the people, and excite the
jealousy of the governor; but the meanness of
their garb, and the simplicity of their answers,
soon convinced him that they were neither de-
sirous nor capable of disturbing the peace of the
Roman empire. They frankly confessed their
royal origin, and their near relation to the mes-
siah; but they disclaimed any temporal views,
and professed that his kingdom, which they
devoutly expected, was purely of a spiritual and
angelic nature. When they were examined con-
cerning their fortune and occupation, they shewed
their hands hardened with daily labour, and
declared that they derived their whole subsistence

* This appellation was at first understood in the most obvious sense, and it was supposed that the brothers of Jesus were the lawful issue of Joseph and of Mary. A devout respect for the virginity of the mother of God suggested to the gnostics, and afterwards to the orthodox Greeks, the expedient of bestowing a second wife on Joseph. The Latins (from the time of Jerome) improved on that hint, asserted the perpetual celibacy of Joseph, and justified by many similar exam-
ples the new interpretation that Jude, as well as Simon and James, who are styled the brothers of Jesus Christ, were only his first coun-
sins. See Tillemont, Mem. Ecclesiast. tom. i, part iii, and Beausobre,
Hist. Critique du Manicheisme, l. ii, c. 2.

from the cultivation of a farm near the village of Cocaba, of the extent of about twenty-four English acres,^c and of the value of nine thousand drachms, or three hundred pounds sterling. The grandsons of St. Jude were dismissed with compassion and contempt.^d

But although the obscurity of the house of David might protect them from the suspicions of a tyrant, the present greatness of his own family alarmed the pusillanimous temper of Domitian, which could only be appeased by the blood of those Romans whom he either feared, or hated, or esteemed. Of the two sons of his uncle Flavius Sabinus,^e the elder was soon convicted of treasonable intentions, and the younger, who bore the name of Flavius Clemens, was indebted for his safety to his want of courage and ability.^f The emperor, for a long time, distinguished so harmless a kinsman by his favour and protection, bestowed on him his own niece Domitilla, adopted the children of that marriage to the hope of the succession, and invested their father with the honours of the consulship. But he had scarcely finished the term of his annual

^c Thirty-nine *ακρα*, squares of an hundred feet each, which, if strictly computed, would scarcely amount to nine acres. But the probability of circumstances, the practice of other Greek writers, and the authority of M. de Valois, inclined me to believe that the *ακρα* is used to express the Roman jugerum.

^d Eusebius, iii, 20. The story is taken from Hegesippus.

^e See the death and character of Sabinus in Tacitus (Hist. iii, 74, 75). Sabinus was the elder brother, and, till the accession of Vespasian, had been considered as the principal support, of the Flavian family.

^f Flaviam Clementum patruelam suum contentissimæ inertie... ex tenuissima suspicione interemit. Sæton. in Domitian. c. 15.

CHAP. XVI. magistracy, when on a slight pretence he was condemned and executed ; Domitilla was banished to a desolate island on the coast of Campania;^e and sentence either of death or of confiscation were pronounced against a great number of persons who were involved in the same accusation. The guilt imputed to their charge was that of *atheism* and *Jewish manners* ;^h a singular association of ideas, which cannot with any propriety be applied except to the christians, as they were obscurely and imperfectly viewed by the magistrates and by the writers of that period. On the strength of so probable an interpretation, and too eagerly admitting the suspicions of a tyrant as an evidence of their honourable crime, the church has placed both Clemens and Domitilla among its first martyrs, and has branded the cruelty of Domitian with the name of the second persecution. But this persecution (if it deserves that epithet) was of no long duration. A few months after the death of Clemens, and the banishment of Domitilla, Stephen, a freedman belonging to the latter, who had enjoyed the favour, but who had not surely embraced the faith, of his mistress, assassinated the emperor in

^e The isle of Pandataria, according to Dion. Bruttius Præsens (apud Euseb. iii, 18) banishes her to that of Pontia, which was not far distant from the other. That difference, and a mistake, either of Eusebius, or of his transcribers, have given occasion to suppose two Domitillas, the wife and the niece of Clemens. See Tillemont, Mémoires Ecclesiastiques, tom. ii, p. 224.

^h Dion. l. lxvii, p. 1112. If the Bruttius Præsens, from whom it is probable that he collected this account, was the correspondent of Pliny (Epistol. vii, 3), we may consider him as a contemporary writer.

his palace.¹ The memory of Domitian was condemned by the senate; his acts were rescinded; his exiles recalled; and under the gentle administration of Nerva, while the innocent were restored to their rank and fortunes, even the most guilty either obtained pardon or escaped punishment.²

II. About ten years afterwards, under the reign of Trajan, the younger Pliny was intrusted by his friend and master with the government of Bithynia and Pontus. He soon found himself at a loss to determine by what rule of justice or of law he should direct his conduct in the execution of an office the most repugnant to his humanity. Pliny had never assisted at any judicial proceedings against the christians, with whose name alone he seems to be acquainted; and he was totally uninformed with regard to the nature of their guilt, the method of their conviction, and the degree of their punishment. In this perplexity he had recourse to his usual expedient, of submitting to the wisdom of Trajan an impartial, and in some respects a favourable, account of the new superstition, requesting the emperor, that he would condescend to resolve his doubts, and to instruct his ignorance.³ The life of Pliny had been employed in the acquisition of learn-

¹ Suet. in Domit. c. 17. Philostrates in Vit. Apollon. I. viii.

² Dion. I. lxvii, p. 1118. Plin. Epistol. iv, 22.

³ Plin. Epistol. x, 97. The learned Mosheim expresses himself (p. 147, 232) with the highest approbation of Pliny's moderate and candid temper. Notwithstanding Dr. Lardner's suspicions (see Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, vol. ii, p. 46) I am unable to discover any bigotry in his language or proceedings.

CHAP. ^{XVI.} ing, and in the business of the world. Since the age of nineteen he had pleaded with distinction in the tribunals of Rome,^m filled a place in the senate, had been invested with the honours of the consulship, and had formed very numerous connections with every order of men, both in Italy and in the provinces. From *his* ignorance, therefore, we may derive some useful information. We may assure ourselves, that when he accepted the government of Bithynia, there was no general laws or decrees of the senate in force against the christians; that neither Trajan nor any of his virtuous predecessors, whose edicts were received into the civil and criminal jurisprudence, had publicly declared their intentions concerning the new sect; and that whatever proceedings had been carried on against the christians, there were none of sufficient weight and authority to establish a precedent for the conduct of a Roman magistrate.

Trajan and his successors establish a legal mode of proceeding against them. The answer of Trajan, to which the christians of the succeeding age have frequently appealed, discovers as much regard for justice and humanity as could be reconciled with his mistaken notions of religious policy.ⁿ Instead of displaying the implacable zeal of an inquisitor,

^m Plin. Epist. v. 8. He pleaded his first cause A. D. 81, the year after the famous eruption of mount Vesuvius, in which his uncle lost his life.

ⁿ Plin. Epist. x. 98. Tertullian (Apolog. c. 5) considers this rescript as a relaxation of the ancient penal laws, "Quas Trajanus ex parte frustratus est;" and yet Tertullian, in another part of his Apologists, exposes the inconsistency of prohibiting inquiries, and enjoining punishments.

anxious to discover the most minute particles of heresy, and exulting in the number of his victims, the emperor expresses much more solicitude to protect the security of the innocent, than to prevent the escape of the guilty. He acknowledges the difficulty of fixing any general plan; but he lays down two salutary rules, which often afforded relief and support to the distressed christians. Though he directs the magistrates to punish such persons as are legally convicted, he prohibits them, with a very humane inconsistency, from making any inquiries concerning the supposed criminals, nor was the magistrate allowed to proceed on every kind of information. Anonymous charges the emperor rejects, as too repugnant to the equity of his government; and he strictly requires, for the conviction of those to whom the guilt of christianity is imputed, the positive evidence of a fair and open accuser. It is likewise probable, that the persons who assumed so invidious an office were obliged to declare the grounds of their suspicions, to specify (both in respect to time and place) the secret assemblies which their christian adversary had frequented, and to disclose a great number of circumstances, which were concealed with the most vigilant jealousy from the eye of the profane. If they succeeded in their prosecution, they were exposed to the resentment of a considerable and active party, to the censure of the more liberal portion of mankind, and to the ignominy which, in every age and country, has

CHAP. attended the character of an informer. If, on
 XVI. the contrary, they failed in their proofs, they incurred the severe and perhaps capital penalty, which, according to a law published by the emperor Hadrian, was inflicted on those who falsely attributed to their fellow-citizens the crime of christianity. The violence of personal or superstitious animosity might sometimes prevail over the most natural apprehensions of disgrace and danger; but it cannot surely be imagined, that accusations of so unpromising an appearance were either lightly or frequently undertaken by the pagan subjects of the Roman empire.^o

Popular
clamours.

The expedient which was employed to elude the prudence of the laws affords a sufficient proof how effectually they disappointed the mischievous designs of private malice or superstitious zeal. In a large and tumultuous assembly the restraints of fear and shame, so forcible on the minds of individuals, are deprived of the greatest part of their influence. The pious christian, as he was desirous to obtain or to escape the glory of martyrdom, expected, either with impatience or with terror, the stated returns of the public games and festivals. On those occasions, the inhabitants of the great cities of the empire were collected in the circus of the theatre, where every circumstance of the place, as well as of the

^o Eusebius (Hist. Ecclesiast. I. iv, c. 9) has preserved the edict of Hadrian. He has likewise (c. 13) given us one still more favourable, under the name of Antoninus, the authenticity of which is not so universally allowed. The second Apology of Justin contains some curious particulars relative to the accusations of christians.

ceremony, contributed to kindle their devotion, and to extinguish their humanity. Whilst the numerous spectators, crowned with garlands, perfumed with incense, purified with the blood of victims, and surrounded with the altars and statues of their tutelar deities, resigned themselves to the enjoyment of pleasures which they considered as an essential part of their religious worship, they recollect, that the christians alone abhorred the gods of mankind, and by their absence and melancholy on these solemn festivals seemed to insult or to lament the public felicity. If the empire had been afflicted by any recent calamity, by a plague, a famine, or an unsuccessful war; if the Tyber had, or if the Nile, had not, risen beyond its banks; if the earth had shaken, or if the temperate order of the seasons had been interrupted, the superstitious pagans were convinced, that the crimes and the impiety of the christians, who were spared by the excessive lenity of the government, had at length provoked the divine justice. It was not among a licentious and exasperated populace, that the forms of legal proceedings could be observed; it was not in an amphitheatre, stained with the blood of wild beasts and gladiators, that the voice of compassion could be heard. The impatient clamours of the multitude denounced the christians as the enemies of gods and men, doomed them to the severest tortures, and venturing to accuse by name some of the most distinguished of the new sectaries, required with irresistible vehemence that they should be instantly appre-

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hended and cast to the lions.^p The provincial governors and magistrates who presided in the public spectacles were usually inclined to gratify the inclinations, and to appease the rage, of the people, by the sacrifice of a few obnoxious victims. But the wisdom of the emperors protected the church from the danger of these tumultuous clamours and irregular accusations, which they justly censured as repugnant both to the firmness and to the equity of their administration. The edicts of Hadrian and of Antoninus Pius expressly declared, that the voice of the multitude should never be admitted as legal evidence to convict or to punish those unfortunate persons who had embraced the enthusiasm of the christians.^q

Trials of
the christ-
ians.

III. Punishment was not the inevitable consequence of conviction; and the christians, whose guilt was the most clearly proved by the testimony of witnesses, or even by their voluntary confession, still retained in their own power the alternative of life or death. It was not so much the past offence, as the actual resistance, which excited the indignation of the magistrate. He was persuaded that he offered them an easy pardon, since if they consented to cast a few grains of incense upon the altar, they were dismissed from the tribunal in safety and with applause.

^p See Tertullian (Apolog. c. 40). The acts of the martyrdom of Polycarp exhibit a lively picture of these tumults, which were usually fomented by the malice of the Jews.

^q These regulations are inserted in the above-mentioned edicts of Hadrian and Pius. See the apology of Melito (apud Euseb. l. ix, c. 26).

It was esteemed the duty of a humane judge to endeavour to reclaim, rather than to punish, those deluded enthusiasts. Varying his tone according to the age, the sex, or the situation, of the prisoners, he frequently condescended to set before their eyes every circumstance which could render life more pleasing, or death more terrible; and to solicit, nay to entreat, them, that they would shew some compassion to themselves, to their families, and to their friends.⁴ If threats and persuasions proved ineffectual, he had often recourse to violence; the scourge and the rack were called in to supply the deficiency of argument, and every art of cruelty was employed to subdue such inflexible, and, as it appeared to the pagans, such criminal obstinacy. The ancient apologists of christianity have censured, with equal truth and severity, the irregular conduct of their persecutors, who, contrary to every principle of judicial proceeding, admitted the use of torture, in order to obtain, not a confession, but a denial, of the crime which was the object of their inquiry.⁵ The monks of the succeeding ages, who, in their peaceful solitudes, entertained themselves with diversifying the deaths and sufferings of the primitive martyrs, have frequently invented torments of a much more refined and ingenious nature. In particu-

⁴ See the rescript of Trajan, and the conduct of Pliny. The most authentic acts of the martyrs abound in these exhortations.

⁵ In particular, see Tertullian (Apolog. c. 2, 3) and Lactantius (Institut. Divin. v, 9). Their reasonings are almost the same; but we may discover, that one of these apologists has been a lawyer, and the other a rhetorician.

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Iar, it has pleased them to suppose, that the zeal of the Roman magistrates, disdaining every consideration of moral virtue or public decency, endeavoured to seduce those whom they were unable to vanquish, and that by their orders the most brutal violence was offered to those whom they found it impossible to seduce. It is related, that pious females, who were prepared to despise death, were sometimes condemned to a more severe trial, and called upon to determine whether they set a higher value on their religion or on their chastity. The youths to whose licentious embraces they were abandoned, received a solemn exhortation from the judge, to exert their most strenuous efforts to maintain the honour of Venus against the impious virgin who refused to burn incense on her altars. Their violence, however, was commonly disappointed, and the seasonable interposition of some miraculous power preserved the chaste spouses of Christ from the dishonour even of an involuntary defeat. We should not indeed neglect to remark, that the more ancient as well as authentic memorials of the church are seldom polluted with these extravagant and indecent fictions.^t

Humanity
of the Ro-
man magis-
trates.

The total disregard of truth and probability in the representations of these primitive martyrdoms

^t See two instances of this kind of torture in the *Acta Sincera Martyrum*, published by Ruinart, p. 160, 399. Jerome, in his Legend of Paul the Hermit, tells a strange story of a young man, who was chained naked on a bed of flowers, and assaulted by a beautiful and wanton courtesan. He quelled the rising temptation by biting off his tongue.

was occasioned by a very natural mistake. The ecclesiastical writers of the fourth or fifth centuries ascribed to the magistrates of Rome the same degree of implacable and unrelenting zeal which filled their own breasts against the heretics or the idolaters of their own times. It is not improbable that some of those persons who were raised to the dignities of the empire might have imbibed the prejudices of the populace, and that the cruel disposition of others might occasionally be stimulated by motives of avarice or of personal resentment.^u But it is certain, and we may appeal to the grateful confessions of the first christians, that the greatest part of those magistrates who exercised in the provinces the authority of the emperor, or of the senate, and to whose hands alone the jurisdiction of life and death was intrusted, behaved like men of polished manners and liberal education, who respected the rules of justice, and who were conversant with the precepts of philosophy. They frequently declined the odious task of persecution, dismissed the charges with contempt, or suggested to the accused christian some legal evasion, by which he might elude the severity of the laws.^x Whenever they were invested with a discretionary

^u The conversion of his wife provoked Claudio Herminianus, governor of Cappadocia, to treat the christians with uncommon severity. Tertullian ad Scapulam, c. 3.

^x Tertullian, in his epistle to the governor of Africa, mentions several remarkable instances of lenity and forbearance, which had happened within his knowledge.

CHAP. power,⁷ they used it much less for the oppression than for the relief and benefit of the afflicted church. They were far from condemning all the christians who were accused before their tribunal, and very far from punishing with death all those who were convicted of an obstinate adherence to the new superstition. Contenting themselves, for the most part, with the milder chastisements of imprisonment, exile, or slavery in the mines,² they left the unhappy victims of their justice some reason to hope that a prosperous event, the accession, the marriage, or the triumph, of an emperor, might speedily restore them, by a general pardon, to their former state.

Inconsider-
able num-
ber of mar-
ties. The martyrs, devoted to immediate execution by the Roman magistrates, appear to have been selected from the most opposite extremes. They were either bishops and presbyters, the persons the most distinguished among the christians by their rank and influence, and whose example might strike terror into the whole sect;³ or else they were

⁷ *Neque enim in universum aliquid quod quasi certam formam habeat constitui potest:* an expression of Trajan, which gave a very great latitude to the governors of provinces.

² *In Metalla damnamur, in insulas relegamur.* Tertullian, *Apol.* c. 12. The mines of Numidia contained nine bishops, with a proportionable number of their clergy and people, to whom Cyprian addressed a pious epistle of praise and comfort. See Cyprian. *Epist.* 76, 77.

³ Though we cannot receive with entire confidence, either the epistles or the acts of Ignatius (they may be found in the second volume of the *Apostolic Fathers*), yet we may quote that bishop of Antioch as one of these *exemplary martyrs*. He was sent in chains to Rome as a public spectacle; and when he arrived at Froas, he received the pleasing intelligence, that the persecution of Antioch was already at an end.

the meanest and most abject among them, particularly those of the servile condition whose lives were esteemed of little value, and whose sufferings were viewed by the ancients with too careless an indifference.^b The learned Origen, who, from his experience as well as reading, was intimately acquainted with the history of the christians, declares, in the most express terms, that the number of martyrs was very inconsiderable.^c His authority would alone be sufficient to annihilate that formidable army of martyrs, whose relics, drawn for the most part from the catacombs of Rome, have replenished so many churches,^d and whose marvellous achievements

^b Among the martyrs of Lyons (Euseb. l. v. c. I) the slave Blandina was distinguished by more exquisite tortures. Of the five martyrs so much celebrated in the acts of Felicitas and Perpetua, two were of a servile, and two others of a very mean, condition.

^c Origen. advers. Celsum, l. iii. p. 116. His words deserve to be transcribed. “Ολιγοι κατα καιρούς, καὶ σφράγεις ενεργημένοις περὶ τῶν Κριστιανῶν θεοτελεῖς τεθηκασι.”

^d If we recollect that all the plebeians of Rome were not christians, and that all the christians were not saints and martyrs, we may judge with how much safety religious honours can be ascribed to bones or urns, indiscriminately taken from the public burial-place. After ten centuries of a very free and open trade, some suspicions have arisen among the more learned catholics. They now require, as a proof of sanctity and martyrdom, the letters *b. m.* a phial full of red liquor, supposed to be blood, or the figure of a palm tree. But the two former signs are of little weight, and with regard to the last, it is observed by the critics, 1. That the figure, as it is called, of a palm, is perhaps a cypress, and perhaps only a stop, the flourish of a comma, used in the monumental inscriptions. 2. That the palm was the symbol of victory among the pagans. 3. That among the christians it served as the emblem, not only of martyrdom, but in general of a joyful resurrection. See the epistle of P. Mabillon on the worship of unknown saints, and Muratori *supra le Antichità Italiane*, Dissertat. Iviii.

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have been the subject of so many volumes of holy romance.^e But the general assertion of Origen may be explained and confirmed by the particular testimony of his friend Dionysius, who, in the immense city of Alexandria, and under the rigorous persecution of Decius, reckons only ten men and seven women who suffered for the profession of the christian name.^f

Example
of Cyprian,
bishop of
Carthage.

During the same period of persecution, the zealous, the eloquent, the ambitious, Cyprian governed the church, not only of Carthage, but even of Africa. He possessed every quality which could engage the reverence of the faithful, or provoke the suspicions and resentment of the pagan magistrates. His character, as well as his station, seemed to mark out that holy prelate as the most distinguished object of envy and of danger.^g The experience, however, of the life of Cyprian is sufficient to prove, that our fancy has exaggerated the perilous situation of a christian bishop, and that the dangers to which he was

^e As a specimen of these legends, we may be satisfied with 10,000 christian soldiers crucified in one day, either by Trajan or Hadrian, on mount Ararat. See Baronius ad Martyrologium Romanum. Tillemont, Mem. Ecclesiast. tom. ii, part ii, p. 438, and Geddes's Miscellanies, vol. ii, p. 203. The abbreviation of Mil. which may signify either soldiers or thousands, is said to have occasioned some extraordinary mistakes.

^f Dionysius ap. Euseb. l. vi, c. 41. One of the seventeen was likewise accused of robbery.

^g The letters of Cyprian exhibit a very curious and original picture, both of the man and the times. See likewise the two lives of Cyprian, composed with equal accuracy, though with very different views; the one by Le Clerc (Bibliotheque Universelle, tom. xii, p. 208-378), the other by Tillemont, Memoires Ecclesiastiques, tom. iv, part i, p. 76-459.

exposed were less imminent than those which temporal ambition is always prepared to encounter in the pursuit of honours. Four Roman emperors, with their families, their favourites, and their adherents, perished by the sword in the space of ten years, during which the bishop of Carthage guided by his authority and eloquence the counsels of the African church. It was only in the third year of his administration, that he had reason, during a few months, to apprehend the severe edicts of Decius, the vigilance of the magistrate, and the clamours of the multitude, who loudly demanded, that Cyprian, the leader of the christians, should be thrown to the lions. Prudence suggested the necessity of a ^{His danger and flight.} temporary retreat, and the voice of prudence was obeyed. He withdrew himself into an obscure solitude, from whence he could maintain a constant correspondence with the clergy and people of Carthage; and concealing himself till the tempest was past, he preserved his life, without relinquishing either his power or his reputation. His extreme caution did not, however, escape the censure of the more rigid christians who lamented, or the reproaches of his personal enemies who insulted, a conduct which they considered as a pusillanimous and criminal desertion of the most sacred duty.^h The propriety of reserving himself for the future exigencies of the church,

^h See the polite, but severe, epistle of the clergy of Rome to the Bishop of Carthage (Cyprian, epist. 8, 9). Pontius labours, with the greatest care and diligence, to justify his master against the general censure.

CHAP. the example of several holy bishops,¹ and the
XVI. divine admonitions which, as he declares himself,
he frequently received in visions and ecstasies,
were the reasons alleged in his justification.²
But his best apology may be found in the cheerful
resolution, with which, about eight years
afterwards, he suffered death in the cause of re-
ligion. The authentic history of his martyrdom
has been recorded with unusual candour and im-
partiality. A short abstract, therefore, of its
most important circumstances, will convey the
clearest information of the spirit, and of the
forms, of the Roman persecutions.³

^{A.D. 257.}
<sup>His Banish-
ment.</sup> When Valerian was consul for the third, and
Gallienus for the fourth, time, Paternus, pro-
consul of Africa, summoned Cyprian to appear
in his private council-chamber. He there ac-
quainted him with the imperial mandate which
he had just received,⁴ that those who had aban-
doned the Roman religion should immediately
return to the practice of the ceremonies of their

¹ In particular those of Dionysius of Alexandria, and Gregory Thaumaturgus of Nero-Caesarea. See Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. vi, c. 40, and Mémoires de Tillemont, tom. iv, part ii, p. 685.

² See Cyprian, epist. 16, and his life by Pontius.

³ We have an original life of Cyprian by the deacon Pontius, the companion of his exile, and the spectator of his death; and we like-
wise possess the ancient proconsular acts of his martyrdom. These two relations are consistent with each other, and with probability; and what is somewhat remarkable, they are both unsullied by any
miraculous circumstances.

⁴ It should seem that these were circular orders, sent at the same
time to all the governors. Dionysius (ap. Euseb. l. vii, c. 11) relates
the history of his own banishment from Alexandria, almost in the
same manner. But as he escaped and survived the persecution, we
must account him either more or less fortunate than Cyprian.

ancestors. Cyprian replied, without hesitation, CHAP.
XVI. that he was a christian and a bishop, devoted to the worship of the true and only Deity, to whom he offered up his daily supplications for the safety and prosperity of the two emperors, his lawful sovereigns. With modest confidence he pleaded the privilege of a citizen, in refusing to give any answer to some invidious, and indeed illegal, questions which the proconsul had proposed. A sentence of banishment was pronounced as the penalty of Cyprian's disobedience ; and he was conducted without delay to Curubis, a free and maritime city of Zeugitania, in a pleasant situation, a fertile territory, and at the distance of about forty miles from Carthage.^a The exiled bishop enjoyed the conveniences of life and the consciousness of virtue. His reputation was diffused over Africa and Italy ; an account of his behaviour was published for the edification of the christian world ;^b and his solitude was frequently interrupted by the letters, the visits, and the congratulations, of the faithful. On the arrival of a new proconsul in the province, the fortune of Cyprian appeared for some time to wear a still

^a See Plin. Hist. Natur. v. 3. Cellarius, Geograph. Antiq. part iii. p. 96. Shaw's Travels, p. 90 ; and for the adjacent country (which is terminated by cape Bona, or the promontory of Mercury) l'Afrique de Marmol. tom. ii. p. 494. There are the remains of an aqueduct near Curubis, or Curbis, at present altered into Gurbes ; and Dr. Shaw read an inscription, which styles that city *Colonia Fulvia*. The deacon Pontius (in Vit. Cyprian, c. 12) calls it " Apri-
" cum et competentem locum, hospitium pro voluntate secretum, et
" quicquid apponi eis arte promissum est, qui regnum et justitiam
" Dei quarunt."

^b See Cyprian. Epistol. 77. Edit. Fell.

CHAP. more favourable aspect. He was recalled from
 XVI. banishment; and though not yet permitted to return to Carthage, his own gardens in the neighbourhood of the capital were assigned for the place of his residence.^p

His con-
demnation.

At length, exactly one year^q after Cyprian was first apprehended, Galerius Maximus, pro-consul of Africa, received the imperial warrant for the execution of the christian teachers. The bishop of Carthage was sensible that he should be singled out for one of the first victims; and the frailty of nature tempted him to withdraw himself, by a secret flight, from the danger and the honour of martyrdom: but soon recovering that fortitude which his character required, he returned to his gardens and patiently expected the ministers of death. Two officers of rank, who were intrusted with that commission, placed Cyprian between them in a chariot; and as the proconsul was not then at leisure, they conducted him, not to a prison, but to a private house in Carthage, which belonged to one of them. An elegant supper was provided for the entertainment of the bishop; and his christian friends were permitted, for the last time, to enjoy his society, whilst the streets were filled with a multitude of the faithful.

^p Upon his conversion, he had sold those gardens for the benefit of the poor. The indulgence of God (most probably the liberality of some christian friend) restored them to Cyprian. See Pontius, c. 15.

^q When Cyprian, a twelvemonth before, was sent into exile, he dreamt that he should be put to death the next day. The event made it necessary to explain that word, as signifying a year. Pontius, c. 12.

anxious and alarmed at the approaching fate of their spiritual father.⁷ In the morning he appeared before the tribunal of the proconsul, who, after informing himself of the name and situation of Cyprian, commanded him to offer sacrifice, and pressed him to reflect on the consequences of his disobedience. The refusal of Cyprian was firm and decisive; and the magistrate, when he had taken the opinion of his council, pronounced with some reluctance the sentence of death. It was conceived in the following terms: "That Thascius Cyprianus should be immediately beheaded, as the enemy of the gods of Rome, and as the chief and ringleader of a criminal association, which he had seduced into an impious resistance against the laws of the most holy emperors, Valerian and Gallienus."⁸ The manner of his execution was the mildest and least painful that could be inflicted on a person convicted of any capital offence; nor was the use of torture admitted to obtain from the bishop of Carthage either the recantation of his principles, or the discovery of his accomplices.

As soon as the sentence was proclaimed, a general cry of "We will die with him," arose at once among the listening multitude of christians who waited before the palace gates. The gene-

⁷ Pontius (c. 15) acknowledges that Cyprian, with whom he supped, passed the night *custodia delicata*. The bishop exercised a last and very proper act of jurisdiction, by directing that the younger females, who watched in the street, should be removed from the dangers and temptations of a nocturnal crowd. *Act. Proconsularia*, c. 2.

⁸ See the original sentence in the *Acts*, c. 4, and in Pontius, c. 17. The latter expresses it in a more rhetorical manner.

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rous effusions of their zeal and affection were neither serviceable to Cyprian nor dangerous to themselves. He was led away under a guard of tribunes and centurions, without resistance and without insult, to the place of his execution, a spacious and level plain near the city, which was already filled with great numbers of spectators. His faithful presbyters and deacons were permitted to accompany their holy bishop. They assisted him in laying aside his upper garment, spread linen on the ground to catch the precious relics of his blood, and received his orders to bestow five-and-twenty pieces of gold on the executioner. The martyr then covered his face with his hands, and at one blow his head was separated from his body. His corpse remained during some hours exposed to the curiosity of the gentiles; but in the night it was removed, and transported in a triumphal procession, and with a splendid illumination, to the burial-place of the christians. The funeral of Cyprian was publicly celebrated without receiving any interruption from the Roman magistrates; and those among the faithful, who had performed the last offices to his person and his memory, were secure from the danger of inquiry or of punishment. It is remarkable, that of so great a multitude of bishops in the province of Africa, Cyprian was the first who was esteemed worthy to obtain the crown of martyrdom.^t

^t Pontius, c. 19. M. de Tillemont (Memoires, tom. iv, part i, p. 456, note 50) is not pleased with so positive an exclusion of any former martyrs of the episcopal rank.

It was in the choice of Cyprian, either to die CHAP.
XVI. a martyr, or to live an apostate; but on that choice depended the alternative of honour or infamy. Could we suppose that the ^{Various incitements to martyrdom.} bishop of Carthage had employed the profession of the christian faith only as the instrument of his avarice or ambition, it was still incumbent on him to support the character which he had assumed; ^a and, if he possessed the smallest degree of manly fortitude, rather to expose himself to the most cruel tortures, than by a single act to exchange the reputation of a whole life, for the abhorrence of his christian brethren, and the contempt of the gentile world. But if the zeal of Cyprian was supported by the sincere conviction of the truth of those doctrines which he preached, the crown of martyrdom must have appeared to him as an object of desire rather than of terror. It is not easy to extract any distinct ideas from the vague though eloquent declamations of the fathers, or to ascertain the degree of immortal glory and happiness which they confidently promised to those who were so fortunate as to shed their blood in the cause of religion.^x They inculcated with becoming diligence, that

^a Whatever opinion we may entertain of the character or principles of Thomas Becket, we must acknowledge that he suffered death with a constancy not unworthy of the primitive martyrs. See Lord Lyttelton's History of Henry II, vol. ii, p. 592, &c.

^x See in particular the treatise of Cyprian de Lapsis, p. 87-98, edit. Fell. The learning of Dodwell (Dissertat. Cyprianic. xii, xiii), and the ingenuity of Middleton (Free Inquiry, p. 162, &c.), have left scarcely any thing to add concerning the merit, the honours, and the motives of the martyrs.

CHAP. the fire of martyrdom supplied every defect and
XVI. expiated every sin ; that while the souls of ordinary christians were obliged to pass through a slow and painful purification, the triumphant sufferers entered into the immediate fruition of eternal bliss, where, in the society of the patriarchs, the apostles, and the prophets, they reigned with Christ, and acted as his assessors in the universal judgment of mankind. The assurance of a lasting reputation upon earth, a motive so congenial to the vanity of human nature, often served to animate the courage of the martyrs. The honours which Rome or Athens bestowed on those citizens who had fallen in the cause of their country, were cold and unmeaning demonstrations of respect, when compared with the ardent gratitude and devotion which the primitive church expressed towards the victorious champions of the faith. The annual commemoration of their virtues and sufferings was observed as a sacred ceremony, and at length terminated in religious worship. Among the christians who had publicly confessed their religious principles, those who (as it very frequently happened) had been dismissed from the tribunal or the prisons of the pagan magistrates obtained such honours as were justly due to their imperfect martyrdom, and their generous resolution. The most pious females courted the permission of imprinting kisses on the fetters which they had worn, and on the wounds which they had received. Their persons were esteemed holy, their decisions were

admitted with deference, and they too often CHAP.
abused, by their spiritual pride and licentious XVI.
manners, the pre-eminence which their zeal and
intrepidity had acquired.³ Distinctions like
these, whilst they display the exalted merit, be-
tray the inconsiderable number of those who
suffered, and of those who died for the profes-
sion of christianity.

The sober discretion of the present age will Ardour of
more readily censure than admire, but can more the first
easily admire than imitate, the fervour of the
first christians, who, according to the lively ex-
pression of Sulpicius Severus, desired martyrdom
with more eagerness than his own contemporaries
solicited a bishopric.² The epistles which Ig-
natius composed, as he was carried in chains
through the cities of Asia, breathe sentiments
the most repugnant to the ordinary feelings of
human nature. He earnestly beseeches the Ro-
mans, that when he should be exposed in the
amphitheatre, they would not, by their kind but
unseasonable intercession, deprive him of the
crown of glory; and he declares his resolution
to provoke and irritate the wild beasts which
might be employed as the instruments of his

³ Cyprian. *Eistol. 5, 6, 7, 22, 24, and de Unitat. Ecclesiae.* The number of pretended martyrs has been very much multiplied, by the custom which was introduced of bestowing that honourable name on confessors.

² Certatim gloria in certamina rubeatur; multique avidius tum martyria gloriis mortibus querebantur, quam nunc episcopatus praevis ambitionibus appetuntur. Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. He might have omitted the word nunc.

CHAP. death.^a Some stories are related of the courage
XVI. of martyrs, who actually performed what Ignatius had intended ; who exasperated the fury of the lions, pressed the executioner to hasten his office, cheerfully leaped into the fires which were kindled to consume them, and discovered a sensation of joy and pleasure in the midst of the most exquisite tortures. Several examples have been preserved of a zeal impatient of those restraints which the emperors had provided for the security of the church. The christians sometimes supplied by their voluntary declaration the want of an accuser, rudely disturbed the public service of paganism,^b and rushing in crowds round the tribunal of the magistrates, called upon them to pronounce and to inflict the sentence of the law. The behaviour of the christians was too remarkable to escape the notice of the ancient philosophers ; but they seem to have considered it with much less admiration than astonishment. Incapable of conceiving the motives which sometimes transported the fortitude of believers beyond the bounds of prudence or reason, they treated such an eagerness to die as

^a See Epist. ad Roman. c. 4, 5, ap. Patres Apostol. tom. ii, p. 27. It suited the purpose of Bishop Pearson (see *Vindicatio Ignatianæ*, part ii, c. 9) to justify, by a profusion of examples and authorities, the sentiments of Ignatius.

^b The story of Polyeuctes, on which Corneille has founded a very beautiful tragedy, is one of the most celebrated, though not perhaps the most authentic, instances of this excessive zeal. We should observe, that the sixtieth canon of the council of Illiberis refuses the title of martyrs to those who exposed themselves to death, by publicly destroying the idols.

the strange result of obstinate despair, of stupid CHAP.
insensibility, or of superstitious phrenzy.^c " Un- XVL
" happy men!" exclaimed the proconsul Antoninus to the christians of Asia; " unhappy men!
" if you are thus weary of your lives, is it so
" difficult for you to find ropes and preci-
" pices?"^d He was extremely cautious (as it
is observed by a learned and pious historian) of
punishing men who had found no accusers but
themselves, the imperial laws not having made
any provision for so unexpected a case: con-
demning therefore a few, as a warning to their
brethren, he dismissed the multitude with indig-
nation and contempt.^e Notwithstanding this
real or affected disdain, the intrepid constancy
of the faithful was productive of more salutary
effects on those minds which nature or grace had
disposed for the easy reception of religious truth.
On these melancholy occasions, there were many
among the gentiles who pitied, who admired,
and who were converted. The generous enthu-
siasm was communicated from the sufferer to the
spectators; and the blood of martyrs, according
to a well-known observation, became the seed of
the church.

^c See Epictetus, l. iv, c. 7 (though there is some doubt whether he alludes to the christians). Marcus Antoninus de Rebus suis, l. xi, c. 3. Lucian in *Eregrin.*

^d Tertullian ad Scapul. c. 5. The learned are divided between three persons of the same name, who were all proconsuls of Asia. I am inclined to ascribe this story to Antoninus Pius, who was afterwards emperor, and who may have governed Asia, under the reign of Trajan.

^e Mosheim, de Rebus Christ. ante Constantin. p. 235.

CHAP.
XVI.Gradual
relaxation.

But although devotion had raised, and eloquence continued to inflame, this fever of the mind, it insensibly gave way to the more natural hopes and fears of the human heart; to the love of life, the apprehension of pain, and the horror of dissolution. The more prudent rulers of the church found themselves obliged to restrain the indiscreet ardour of their followers, and to distrust a constancy which too often abandoned them in the hour of trial.¹ As the lives of the faithful became less mortified and austere, they were every day less ambitious of the honours of martyrdom; and the soldiers of Christ, instead of distinguishing themselves by voluntary deeds of heroism, frequently deserted their post, and fled in confusion before the enemy whom it was their duty to resist. There were three methods, however, of escaping the flames of persecution, which were not attended with an equal degree of guilt: the first indeed was generally allowed to be innocent; the second was of a doubtful, or at least of a venial, nature; but the third implied a direct and criminal apostacy from the christian faith.

Three me-
thods of
escaping
martyr-
dom.

I. A modern inquisitor would hear with surprise, that whenever an information was given to a Roman magistrate, of any person within his jurisdiction who had embraced the sect of the christians, the charge was communicated to the party accused, and that a convenient time was

¹ See the epistle of the church of Smyrna, ap. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. iv, c. 15.

allowed him to settle his domestic concerns, and to prepare an answer to the crime which was imputed to him.^g If he entertained any doubt of his own constancy, such a delay afforded him an opportunity of preserving his life and honour by flight, of withdrawing himself into some obscure retirement or some distant province, and of patiently expecting the return of peace and security. A measure so consonant to reason was soon authorized by the advice and example of the most holy prelates; and seems to have been censured by few, except by the montanists, who deviated into heresy by their strict and obstinate adherence to the rigour of ancient discipline.^h

ii. The provincial governors, whose zeal was less prevalent than their avarice, had countenanced the practice of selling certificates (or libels as they were called), which attested, that the persons therein mentioned had complied with the laws, and sacrificed to the Roman deities. By producing these false declarations, the opulent and timid christians were enabled to silence the malice of an informer, and to reconcile in

^g In the second apology of Justin, there is a particular and very curious instance of this legal delay. The same indulgence was granted to accused christians, in the persecution of Decius; and Cyprian (de Lapsis) expressly mentions the "Dies negantibus praestitutus."

^h Tertullian considers flight from persecution as an imperfect, but very criminal, apostacy, as an impious attempt to elude the will of God, &c. &c. He has written a treatise on this subject (see p. 536-544, edit. Rigalt.), which is filled with the wildest fanaticism, and the most incoherent declamation. It is, however, somewhat remarkable, that Tertullian did not suffer martyrdom himself.

CHAP. some measure their safety with their religion.
 XVI. A slight penance atoned for this profane dissimulation.¹ III. In every persecution there were great numbers of unworthy christians, who publicly disowned or renounced the faith which they had professed; and who confirmed the sincerity of their abjuration, by the legal acts of burning incense or of offering sacrifices. Some of these apostates had yielded on the first menace or exhortation of the magistrate; whilst the patience of others had been subdued by the length and repetition of tortures. The affrighted countenances of some betrayed their inward remorse, while others advanced with confidence and alacrity to the altars of the gods.^k But the disguise, which fear had imposed, subsisted no longer than the present danger. As soon as the severity of the persecution was abated, the doors of the churches were assailed by the returning multitude of penitents, who detested their idolatrous submission, and who solicited with equal ardour, but with various success, their re-admission into the society of christians.^l

¹ The *Libellati*, who are chiefly known by the writing of Cyprian, are described with the utmost precision, in the copious commentary of Mosheim, p. 483-489.

^k Plin. *Epistol.* x, 97. Dionysius Alexandrin. ap. Euseb. l. vi, c. 41. *Ad prima statim verba minantis inimici maximus fratrum numerus fidem suam prodidit: nec prostratus est persecutionis impetu, sed voluntario lapsu scipsum prostravit.* Cyprian, *Opera*, p. 89. Among these deserters were many priests, and even bishops.

^l It was on this occasion that Cyprian wrote his treatise *De Lapsis*, and many of his epistles. The controversy concerning the treatment

iv. Notwithstanding the general rules established for the conviction and punishment of the christians, the fate of those sectaries, in an extensive and arbitrary government, must still, in a great measure, have depended on their own behaviour, the circumstances of the times, and the temper of their supreme as well as subordinate rulers. Zeal might sometimes provoke, and prudence might sometimes avert or assuage, the superstitious fury of the pagans. A variety of motives might dispose the provincial governors either to enforce or to relax the execution of the laws; and of these motives, the most forcible was their regard not only for the public edicts, but for the secret intentions of the emperor, a glance from whose eye was sufficient to kindle or to extinguish the flames of persecution. As often as any occasional severities were exercised in the different parts of the empire, the primitive christians lamented and perhaps magnified their own sufferings; but the celebrated number of *ten* persecutions has been determined by the ecclesiastical writers of the fifth century, who possessed a more distinct view of the prosperous or adverse fortunes of the church, from the age of Nero to that of Diocletian. The ingenious parallels of the *ten* plagues of Egypt, and of the *ten* horns of the Apocalypse, first

CHAP. XVI.

Alternatives of se-
verity and
toleration.

ment of penitent apostates, does not occur among the christians of the preceding century. Shall we ascribe this to the superiority of their faith and courage, or to our less intimate knowledge of their history?

CHAP. XVI. suggested this calculation to their minds; and in their application of the faith of prophecy to the truth of history, they were careful to select those reigns which were indeed the most hostile to the christian cause.^m But these transient persecutions served only to revive the zeal, and to restore the discipline, of the faithful; and the moments of extraordinary rigour were compensated by much longer intervals of peace and security. The indifference of some princes, and the indulgence of others, permitted the christians to enjoy, though not perhaps a legal, yet an actual and public, toleration of their religion.

Supposed
edicts of
Tiberius
and Mar-
cus Anto-
ninus.

The apology of Tertullian contains two very ancient, very singular, but at the same time very suspicious, instances of imperial clemency; the edicts published by Tiberius and by Marcus Antoninus, and designed not only to protect the innocence of the christians, but even to proclaim those stupendous miracles which had attested the truth of their doctrine. The first of these examples is attended with some difficulties which might perplex the sceptical mind.ⁿ We are required to believe, that Pontius Pilate in-

^m See Mosheim, p. 97. Sulpicius Severus was the first author of this computation; though he seemed desirous of reserving the tenth and greatest persecution for the coming of the antichrist.

ⁿ The testimony given by Pontius Pilate is first mentioned by Justin. The successive improvements which the story has acquired (as it passed through the hands of Tertullian, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Orosius, Gregory of Tours, and the authors of the several editions of the acts of Pilate) are very fairly stated by Dom. Calmet, *Dissertat. sur l'Ecriture*, tom. iii, p. 651, &c.

formed the emperor of the unjust sentence of death which he had pronounced against an innocent, and, as it appeared, a divine, person ; and that, without acquiring the merit, he exposed himself to the danger, of martyrdom ; *that* Tiberius, who avowed his contempt for all religion, immediately conceived the design of placing the Jewish messiah among the gods of Rome ; *that* his servile senate ventured to disobey the commands of their master ; *that* Tiberius, instead of resenting their refusal, contented himself with protecting the christians from the severity of the laws, many years before such laws were enacted, or before the church had assumed any distinct name or existence ; and, lastly, *that* the memory of this extraordinary transaction was preserved in the most public and authentic records, which escaped the knowledge of the historians of Greece and Rome, and were only visible to the eyes of an African christian, who composed his apology one hundred and sixty years after the death of Tiberius. The edict of Marcus Antoninus is supposed to have been the effect of his devotion and gratitude, for the miraculous deliverance which he had obtained in the Marcomannic war. The distress of the legions, the seasonable tempest of rain and hail, of thunder and of lightning, and the dismay and defeat of the barbarians, have been celebrated by the eloquence of several pagan writers. If there were any christians in that army, it was natural that they should ascribe some merit to

CHAP. ^{XVI.} the fervent prayers, which, in the moment of danger, they had offered up for their own and the public safety. But we are still assured by monuments of brass and marble, by the imperial medals, and by the Antonine column, that neither the prince nor the people entertained any sense of this signal obligation, since they unanimously attribute their deliverance to the providence of Jupiter, and to the interposition of Mercury. During the whole course of his reign, Marcus despised the christians as a philosopher, and punished them as a sovereign.^o

State of the christians in the reigns of Commodus and Severus, a. d. 180. By a singular fatality, the hardships which they had endured under the government of a virtuous prince, immediately ceased on the accession of a tyrant; and as none except themselves had experienced the injustice of Marcus, so they alone were protected by the lenity of Commodus. The celebrated Marcia, the most favoured of his concubines, and who at length contrived the murder of her imperial lover, entertained a singular affection for the oppressed church; and though it was impossible that she could reconcile the practice of vice with the precepts of the gospel, she might hope to atone for the frailties of her sex and professions, by declaring herself the patroness of the christians.^p

* On this miracle, as it is commonly called, of the thundering legion, see the admirable criticism of Mr. Moyle, in his works, vol. ii, p. 281-300.

^p Dion Cassius, or rather his abbreviator Xiphilin, l. lxxii, p. 1206. Mr. Moyle (p. 266) has explained the condition of the church under the reign of Commodus.

Under the gracious protection of Marcia, they passed in safety the thirteen years of a cruel tyranny; and when the empire was established in the house of Severus, they formed a domestic but more honourable connection with the new court. The emperor was persuaded, that in a dangerous sickness, he had derived some benefit, either spiritual or physical, from the holy oil with which one of his slaves had anointed him. He always treated with peculiar distinction several persons of both sexes who had embraced the new religion. The nurse as well as the preceptor of Caracalla were christians; and if that young prince ever betrayed a sentiment of humanity, it was occasioned by an incident, which, however trifling, bore some relation to the cause of christianity.^a Under the reign of Severus, the fury of the populace was checked; the rigour of ancient laws was for some time suspended; and the provincial governors were satisfied with receiving an annual present from the churches within their jurisdiction, as the price, or as the reward, of their moderation.^b The controversy concerning the precise time of the celebration of Easter armed the bishops of Asia and

^a Compare the life of Caracalla in the Augustan History with the epistle of Tertullian to Scapula. Dr. Jörin (Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii, p. 5, &c.) considers the cure of Severus, by the means of holy oil, with a strong desire to convert it into a miracle.

^b Tertullian de Fugâ, c. 13. The present was made during the feast of the Saturnalia; and it is a matter of serious concern to Tertullian, that the faithful should be confounded with the most infamous professions which purchased the connivance of the government.

CHAP. Italy against each other, and was considered as the most important business of this period of leisure and tranquillity.⁴ Nor was the peace of the church interrupted, till the increasing numbers of proselytes seem'd at length to have attracted the attention, and to have alienated the mind, of Severus. With the design of restraining the progress of christianity, he published an edict, which, though it was designed to affect only the new converts, could not be carried into strict execution, without exposing to danger and punishment the most zealous of their teachers and missionaries. In this mitigated persecution, we may still discover the indulgent spirit of Rome and of polytheism, which so readily admitted every excuse in favour of those who practised the religious ceremonies of their fathers.⁵

Of the successors of
Severus,

A. D.
211-249.

But the laws which Severus had enacted soon expired with the authority of that emperor; and the christians, after this accidental tempest, enjoyed a calm of thirty-eight years.⁶ Till this period they had usually held their assemblies in private houses and sequestered places. They were now permitted to erect and consecrate convenient edifices for the purpose of religious worship; to purchase lands, even at Rome itself,

* Euseb. l. v. c. 23, 24. Mosheim, p. 435-447.

⁵ Judeos fieri sub gravi pena vetuit. Idem etiam de Christianis sanxit. Hist. August. p. 70.

⁶ Sulpicius Severus, l. ii, p. 384. This computation (allowing for a single exception) is confirmed by the history of Eusebius, and by the writings of Cyprian.

* The antiquity of christian churches is discussed by Tillemont, (Memoires Ecclesiastiques, tom. iii, part ii, p. 68-72), and by

for the use of the community ; and to conduct the elections of their ecclesiastical ministers in so public, but, at the same time, in so exemplary, a manner, as to deserve the respectful attention of the gentiles.^y This long repose of the church was accompanied with dignity. The reigns of those princes who derived their extraction from the Asiatic provinces proved the most favourable to the christians : the eminent persons of the sect, instead of being reduced to implore the protection of a slave or concubine, were admitted into the palace in the honourable characters of priests and philosophers ; and their mysterious doctrines, which were already diffused among the people, insensibly attracted the curiosity of their sovereign. When the empress Mammæa passed through Antioch, she expressed a desire of conversing with the celebrated Origen, the fame of whose piety and learning was spread over the East. Origen obeyed so flattering an invitation, and though he could not expect to succeed in the conversion of an artful and ambitious woman, she listened with pleasure to his eloquent exhortations, and honourably dismissed him to his re-

Mr. Moyle (vol. i, p. 378-398). The former refers the first construction of them to the peace of Alexander Severus ; the latter, to the peace of Gallienus.

^y See the Augustan History, p. 130. The emperor Alexander adopted their method of publicly proposing the names of those persons who were candidates for ordination. It is true, that the honour of this practice is likewise attributed to the Jews.

CHAP. ^{XVI.} tirement in Palestine.^z The sentiments of Mammæa were adopted by her son Alexander; and the philosophic devotion of that emperor was marked by a singular, but injudicious, regard for the christian religion. In his domestic chapel he placed the statues of Abraham, of Orpheus, of Apollonius, and of Christ, as an honour justly due to those respectable sages who had instructed mankind in the various modes of addressing their homage to the supreme and universal Deity.^a A purer faith, as well as worship, was openly professed and practised among his household. Bishops, perhaps for the first time, were seen at court; and after the death of Alexander, ^{A. D. 235.} when the inhuman Maximin discharged his fury on the favourites and servants of his unfortunate benefactor, a great number of christians, of every rank and of both sexes, were involved in the promiscuous massacre, which, on their account, has improperly received the name of persecution.^b

^z Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. 1. vi, c. 21. Hieronym, de Script. Eccl. c. 54. Mammæa was styled a holy and pious woman, both by the christians and the pagans. From the former, therefore, it was impossible that she should deserve that honourable epithet.

^a See the Augustan History, p. 123. Mosheim (p. 465) seems to refine too much on the domestic religion of Alexander. His design of building a public temple to Christ (Hist. August. p. 129), and the object which was suggested either to him, or in similar circumstances to Hadrian, appear to have no other foundation than an improbable report, invented by the christians, and credulously adopted by an historian of the age of Constantine.

^b Euseb. 1. vi, c. 28. It may be presumed, that the success of the christians had exasperated the increasing bigotry of the pagan.

Notwithstanding the cruel disposition of Maximin, the effects of his resentment against the christians were of a very local and temporary nature; and the pious Origen, who had been proscribed as a devoted victim, was still reserved to convey the truths of the gospel to the ear of monarchs.^c He addressed several edifying letters to the emperor Philip, to his wife, and to his mother; and as soon as that prince, who was born in the neighbourhood of Palestine, had usurped the imperial sceptre, the christians acquired a friend and a protector. The public, and even partial, favour of Philip towards the sectaries of the new religion, and his constant reverence for the ministers of the church, gave some colour to the suspicion, which prevailed in his own times, that the emperor himself was become a convert to the faith;^d and afforded

Dion Cassius, who composed his history under the former reign, had most probably intended for the use of his master those counsels of persecution, which he ascribes to a better age, and to the favourite of Augustus. Concerning this oration of Mæcenas, or rather of Dion, I may refer to my own unbiased opinion (vol. i, p. 55, Not. 25, and to the Abbé de la Bleterie (*Mémoires de l'Academie*, tom. xxiv, p. 303, tom. xxv, p. 432).

^c Orosius, I. vii, c. 19, mentions Origen as the object of Maximin's resentment; and Firmilianus, a Cappadocian bishop of that age, gives a just and confined idea of this persecution (*apud Cyprian. Epist. 75.*).

^d The mention of those princes who were publicly supposed to be christians, as we find it in an epistle of Dionysius of Alexandria (ap. Euseb. I. vii, c. 10), evidently alludes to Philip and his family; and forms a contemporary evidence, that such a report had prevailed: but the Egyptian bishop, who lived at an humble distance from the court of Rome, expresses himself with a becoming diffidence concerning the truth of the fact. The epistles of Origen (which were extant

CHAP. some grounds for a fable which was afterwards
 XVI. invented, that he had been purified by confes-
 sion and penance from the guilt contracted by
 A. D. 249. the murder of his innocent predecessor.^c The
 fall of Philip introduced, with the change of
 masters, a new system of government, so op-
 pressive to the christians, that their former con-
 dition, ever since the time of Domitian, was
 represented as a state of perfect freedom and
 security, if compared with the rigorous treat-
 ment which they experienced under the short
 reign of Decius.^d The virtues of that prince
 will scarcely allow us to suspect that he was
 actuated by a mean resentment against the
 favourites of his predecessor; and it is more
 reasonable to believe, that, in the prosecution of
 his general design to restore the purity of Ro-
 man manners, he was desirous of delivering the
 empire from what he condemned as a recent
 and criminal superstition. The bishops of the
 most considerable cities were removed by exile
 or death: the vigilance of the magistrates pre-
 vented the clergy of Rome, during sixteen
 months, from proceeding to a new election;
 and it was the opinion of the christians, that the

in the time of Eusebius, see l. vi, c. 36) would most probably decide this curious, rather than important, question.

* Euseb. l. vi, c. 34. The story, as is usual, has been embellished by succeeding writers, and is confuted, with much superfluous learning, by Frederick Spanheim (Opera Varia. tom. ii, p. 400, &c.).

^f Lactantius, de Mortibus Persecutorum, c. 3, 4. After celebrating the felicity and increase of the church, under a long succession of good princes; he adds, "Exitit post annos plurimos, execrabile "animal, Decius qui vexaret ecclesiam."

emperor would more patiently endure a competitor for the purple, than a bishop in the capital.^g Were it possible to suppose that the penetration of Decius had discovered pride under the disguise of humility, or that he could foresee the temporal dominion which might insensibly arise from the claims of spiritual authority, we might be less surprised, that he should consider the successors of St. Peter as the most formidable rivals to those of Augustus.

The administration of Valerian was distinguished by a levity and inconstancy, ill-suited to the gravity of the *Roman censor*. In the first part of his reign, he surpassed in clemency those princes who had been suspected of an attachment to the christian faith. In the last three years and a half, listening to the insinuations of a minister addicted to the superstitions of Egypt, he adopted the maxims, and imitated the severity, of his predecessor Decius.^h The accession of Gallienus, which increased the calamities of the empire, restored peace to the church; and the christians obtained the free exercise of their religion, by an edict addressed to the bishops, and conceived in such terms as seemed to acknow-

Of Valerian, Gallienus, and his successors,
A. D. 253-260.

^g Euseb. I. vi, c. 39. Cyprian. Epistol. 55. The see of Rome remained vacant from the martyrdom of Fabianus, the 20th of January, A. D. 250, till the election of Cornelius, the 4th of June, A. D. 251. Decius had probably left Rome, since he was killed before the end of that year.

^h Euseb. I. vii, c. 10. Mosheim (p. 548) has very clearly shewn, that the prefect Macrianus, and the Egyptian *Magus*, are one and the same person.

CHAP. ledge their office and public character.¹ The ancient laws, without being formally repealed, were suffered to sink into oblivion ; and (excepting only some hostile intentions which are attributed to the emperor Aurelian)^k the disciples of Christ passed above forty years in a state of prosperity, far more dangerous to their virtue than the severest trials of persecution.

Paul of Samosata, his manners, A. D. 260.

The story of Paul of Samosata, who filled the metropolitan see of Antioch, while the East was in the hands of Odenathus and Zenobia, may serve to illustrate the condition and character of the times. The wealth of that prelate was a sufficient evidence of his guilt, since it was neither derived from the inheritance of his fathers, nor acquired by the arts of honest industry. But Paul considered the service of the church as a very lucrative profession.¹ His ecclesiastical jurisdiction was venal and rapacious ; he extorted

¹ Eusebius (l. vii, c. 13) gives us a Greek version of this Latin edict, which seems to have been very concise. By another edict, he directed that the *caemeteria* should be restored to the christians.

^k Euseb. l. vii, c. 30. Lactantius de M. P. c. 6. Hieronym. in Chron. p. 177. Orosius, l. vii, c. 23. Their language is in general so ambiguous and incorrect, that we are at a loss to determine how far Aurelian had carried his intentions before he was assassinated. Most of the moderns (except Dodwell, Dissertat. Cyprian. xi, 64) have seized the occasion of gaining a few extraordinary martyrs.

¹ Paul was better pleased with the title of *ducenarius*, than with that of bishop. The *ducenarius* was an imperial procurator, so called from the salary of two hundred *sesterzia*, or £1600, a-year. (See Salmasius ad Hist. August. p. 124). Some critics suppose that the Bishop of Antioch had actually obtained such an office from Zenobia, while others consider it only as a figurative expression of his pomp and insolence.

frequent contributions from the most opulent of the faithful, and converted to his own use a considerable part of the public revenue. By his pride and luxury, the christian religion was rendered odious in the eyes of the gentiles. His council chamber and his throne, the splendour with which he appeared in public, the suppliant crowd who solicited his attention, the multitude of letters and petitions to which he dictated his answers, and the perpetual hurry of business in which he was involved, were circumstances much better suited to the state of a civil magistrate,^m than to the humility of a primitive bishop. When he harangued his people from the pulpit, Paul affected the figurative style and the theatrical gestures of an Asiatic sophist, while the cathedral resounded with the loudest and most extravagant acclamations in the praise of his divine eloquence. Against those who resisted his power, or refused to flatter his vanity, the prelate of Antioch was arrogant, rigid, and inexorable; but he relaxed the discipline, and lavished the treasures, of the church on his dependent clergy, who were permitted to imitate their master in the gratification of every sensual appetite; for Paul indulged himself very freely in the pleasures of the table, and he had received into the episcopal palace two

^m Simony was not unknown in those times; and the clergy sometimes bought what they intended to sell. It appears that the bishopric of Carthage was purchased by a wealthy matron, named Lucilla, for her servant Majorinus. The price was 400 *folles*. (Monument. Antiq. ad calcem Optati, p. 263). Every *folle* contained 125 pieces of silver, and the whole sum may be computed at about £2400.

CHAP. young and beautiful women, as the constant companions of his leisure moments.ⁿ

XVI.
He is de-
graded
from the
see of An-
tioch,
A. D. 270.

Notwithstanding these scandalous vices, if Paul of Samosata had preserved the purity of the orthodox faith, his reign over the capital of Syria would have ended only with his life; and had a seasonable persecution intervened, an effort of courage might perhaps have placed him in the rank of saints and martyrs. Some nice and subtle errors, which he imprudently adopted and obstinately maintained, concerning the doctrine of the trinity, excited the zeal and indignation of the eastern churches.^o From Egypt to the Euxine sea, the bishops were in arms and in motion. Several councils were held, confutations were published, excommunications were pronounced, ambiguous explanations were by turns accepted and refused, treaties were concluded and violated, and at length Paul of Samosata was degraded from his episcopal character, by the sentence of seventy or eighty bishops, who assembled for that purpose at Antioch, and who, without consulting the rights of the clergy or people, appointed a successor by their own authority. The manifest irregularity of this proceeding increased the numbers of the discontented faction; and as Paul, who was no

ⁿ If we are desirous of extenuating the vices of Paul, we must suspect the assembled bishops of the East of publishing the most malicious calumnies, in circular epistles, addressed to all the churches of the empire (ap. Euseb. 1. vii, c. 30).

^o His heresy (like those of Noetus and Sabellius, in the same century) tended to confound the mysterious distinction of the divine persons. See Mosheim, p. 702, &c.

stranger to the arts of courts, had insinuated himself into the favour of Zenobia, he maintained above four years the possession of the episcopal house and office. The victory of Aurelian changed the face of the East, and the two contending parties, who applied to each other the epithets of schism and heresy, were either commanded or permitted to plead their cause before the tribunal of the conqueror. This public and very singular trial affords a convincing proof, that the existence, the property, the privileges, and the internal policy, of the christians, were acknowledged, if not by the laws, at least by the magistrates, of the empire. As a pagan and as a soldier, it could scarcely be expected that Aurelian should enter into the discussion, whether the sentiments of Paul or those of his adversaries were most agreeable to the true standard of the orthodox faith. His determination, however, was founded on the general principles of equity and reason. He considered the bishops of Italy as the most impartial and respectable judges among the christians; and as soon as he was informed that they had unanimously approved the sentence of the council, he acquiesced in their opinion, and immediately gave orders that Paul should be compelled to relinquish the temporal possessions belonging to an office, of which, in the judgment of his brethren, he had been regularly deprived. But while we applaud the justice, we should not overlook the policy, of Aurelian; who was desirous of restoring and cementing the dependence of the provinces on the capital, by every means

The sentence is
executed
by Aurelian,

A. D. 274.

CHAP. which could bind the interest or prejudices of
XVI. any part of his subjects.^P

Peace and
prosperity
of the
church un-
der Diocle-
tian,
A. D. 284-
303.

Amidst the frequent revolutions of the empire, the christians still flourished in peace and prosperity; and notwithstanding a celebrated era of martyrs has been deduced from the accession of Diocletian,^q the new system of policy introduced and maintained by the wisdom of that prince continued, during more than eighteen years, to breath the mildest and most liberal spirit of religious toleration. The mind of Diocletian himself was less adapted indeed to speculative inquiries, than to the active labours of war and government. His prudence rendered him averse to any great innovation; and though his temper was not very susceptible of zeal or enthusiasm, he always maintained an habitual regard for the ancient deities of the empire. But the leisure of the two empresses, of his wife Prisca, and of Valeria his daughter, permitted them to listen with more attention and respect to the truths of christianity, which, in every age, has acknowledged its important obligations to female devotion.^r The principal eunuchs, Lu-

^P Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. 1. vii, c. 30. We are entirely indebted to him for the curious story of Paul of Samosata.

^q The era of martyrs, which is still in use among the Copts and the Abyssinians, must be reckoned from the 29th of August, A. D. 284, as the beginning of the Egyptian year was nineteen days earlier than the real accession of Diocletian. See Dissertation Prelimininaire à l'Art vérifier les Dates.

^r The expression of Lactantius (de M. P. c. 15) “sacrificio pollui
“ coegit,” implies their antecedent conversion to the faith, but does
not seem to justify the assertion of Mosheim (p. 912), that they had
been privately baptized.

tian^s and Dorotheus, Gorgonius and Andrew, CHAP. XVI. who attended the person, possessed the favour, and governed the household, of Diocletian, protected by their powerful influence the faith which they had embraced. Their example was imitated by many of the most considerable officers of the palace, who, in their respective stations, had the care of the imperial ornaments, of the robes, of the furniture, of the jewels, and even of the private treasury; and though it might sometimes be incumbent on them to accompany the emperor when he sacrificed in the temple,^t they enjoyed, with their wives, their children, and their slaves, the free exercise of the christian religion. Diocletian and his colleagues frequently conferred the most important offices on those persons who avowed their abhorrence for the worship of the gods, but who had displayed abilities proper for the service of the state. The bishops held an honourable rank in their respective provinces, and were treated with distinction and respect, not only by the people, but by the magistrates themselves. Almost in every city, the ancient churches were found insufficient to contain the increasing multitude of proselytes; and in their place more stately and capacious edifices were erected for the public worship of the faithful. The corruption of manners and

^s M. de Tillemont (*Mémoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. v, part i, p. 11, 12) has quoted from the *Spicilegium* of Dom. Lue d'Acheri a very curious instruction, which bishop Theonas composed for the use of Lucian.

^t Lactantius de M. P. c. 10.

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principles, so forcibly lamented by Eusebius,¹¹ may be considered, not only as a consequence, but as a proof, of the liberty which the christians enjoyed and abused under the reign of Diocletian. Prosperity had relaxed the nerves of discipline. Fraud, envy, and malice, prevailed in every congregation. The presbyters aspired to the episcopal office, which every day became an object more worthy of their ambition. The bishops, who contended with each other for ecclesiastical pre-eminence, appeared by their conduct to claim a secular and tyrannical power in the church; and the lively faith which still distinguished the christians from the gentiles was shewn much less in their lives, than in their controversial writings.

Progress of
zeal and
supersti-
tion among
the pagans.

Notwithstanding this seeming security, an attentive observer might discern some symptoms that threatened the church with a more violent

persecution than any which she had yet endured. The zeal and rapid progress of the christians awakened the polytheists from their supine indifference in the cause of those deities, whom custom and education had taught them to revere. The mutual provocations of a religious war, which had already continued above two hundred years, exasperated the animosity of the contending parties. The pagans were incensed at the rashness of a recent and obscure sect, which presumed to

¹¹ Eusebius, Hist. Ecclesiast. I. viii, c. 1. The reader, who consults the original, will not accuse me of heightening the picture. Eusebius was about sixteen years of age at the accession of the emperor Diocletian.

accuse their countrymen of error, and to devote their ancestors to eternal misery. The habits of justifying the popular mythology, against the invectives of an implacable enemy, produced in their minds some sentiments of faith and reverence for a system which they had been accustomed to consider with the most careless levity. The supernatural powers assumed by the church inspired at the same time terror and emulation. The followers of the established religion entrenched themselves behind a similar fortification of prodigies; invented new modes of sacrifice, of expiation, and of initiation;^x attempted to revive the credit of their expiring oracles;^y and listened with eager credulity to every impostor, who flattered their prejudices by a tale of wonders.^z Both parties seemed to acknowledge the truth of those miracles which were claimed by their adversaries; and while they were con-

^x We might quote, among a great number of instances, the mysterious worship of Mythras, and the Taurobolia; the latter of which became fashionable in the time of the Antonines (see a Dissertation of M. de Boze, in the *Mémoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, tom. ii, p. 443). The romance of Apuleius is as full of devotion as of satire.

^y The impostor Alexander very strongly recommended the oracle of Trophonius at Mallos, and those of Apollo at Claros and Miletus (Lucian, tom. ii, p. 236, edit. Reitzi). The last of these, whose singular history would furnish a very curious episode, was consulted by Diocletian before he published his edicts of persecution (Laetantius, de M. P. c. 11).

^z Besides the ancient stories of Pythagoras and Aristeas, the cures performed at the shrine of *Æsculapius*, and the fables related of Apollonius of Tyana, were frequently opposed to the miracles of Christ; though I agree with Dr. Lardner (see *Testimonies*, vol. iii, p. 253, 352), that when Philostratus composed the life of Apollonius, he had no such intention.

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tented with ascribing them to the arts of magic, and to the power of dæmons, they mutually concurred in restoring and establishing the reign of superstition.^a Philosophy, her most dangerous enemy, was now converted into her most useful ally. The groves of the academy, the gardens of Epicurus, and even the portico of the stoics, were almost deserted, as so many different schools of scepticism or impiety,^b and many among the Romans were desirous that the writings of Cicero should be condemned and suppressed by the authority of the senate.^c The prevailing sect of the new platonicians judged it prudent to connect themselves with the priests, whom they perhaps despised, against the christians, whom they had reason to fear. These fashionable philosophers prosecuted the design of extracting allegorical wisdom from the fictions of the Greek poets; instituted mysterious rites of

^a It is seriously to be lamented, that the christian fathers, by acknowledging the supernatural, or, as they deem it, the infernal, part of paganism, destroy with their own hands the great advantage which we might otherwise derive from the liberal concessions of our adversaries.

^b Julian (p. 301, edit. Spanheim) expresses a pious joy, that the providence of the gods had distinguished the impious sects, and for the most part destroyed the books of the pyrrhonians and epicureans, which had been very numerous, since Epicurus himself composed no less than 300 volumes. See Diogenes Laertius, l. x, c. 26.

^c Cumque alias audiam mussitare indignanter, et dicere opportere statui per senatum, aboleantur et hæc scripta, quibus christiana religio comprobetur, et vetustatis opprimatur auctoritas. Arnobius adversus Gentes, l. iii, p. 103, 104. He adds very properly, Erroris convincite Ciceronem . . . nam intercipere scripta, et publicatam velle submergere lectionem, non est Deum defendere sed veritatis testificationem timere.

devotion for the use of their chosen disciples; CHAP. recommended the worship of the ancient gods as XVI. the emblems or ministers of the Supreme Deity; and composed against the faith of the gospel many elaborate treatises,^d which have since been committed to the flames by the prudence of orthodox emperors.^e

Although the policy of Diocletian and the humanity of Constantius inclined them to preserve inviolate the maxims of toleration, it was soon discovered that their two associates, Maximian and Galerius, entertained the most implacable aversion for the name and religion of the christians. The minds of those princes had never been enlightened by science; education had never softened their temper. They owed their greatness to their swords, and in their most elevated fortune they still retained their superstitious prejudices of soldiers and peasants. In the general administration of the provinces they obeyed the laws which their benefactor had established; but they frequently found occasions of exercising within their camp and palaces a secret persecution,^f for which the imprudent zeal of the

Maximian
and Gale-
rius punish
a few
christian
soldiers.

^d Lactantius *Divin. Institut.* l. v. c. 2, 3) gives a very clear and spirited account of two of these philosophic adversaries of the faith. The large treatise of Porphyry against the christians consisted of thirty books, and was composed in Sicily about the year 270.

^e See Socrates, *Hist. Ecclesiast.* l. i, c. 9, and *Codex Justinian.* l. i, tit. i, l. 3.

^f Eusebius, l. viii, c. 4, c. 17. He limits the number of military martyrs, by a remarkable expression (*σταύρωσεν τούτους εἰς τὰ και διπλα- γες*), of which neither his Latin nor French translator have rendered the

CHAP. christians sometimes offered the most specious
XVI. pretences. A sentence of death was executed
upon Maximilianus, an African youth, who had
been produced by his own father before the ma-
gistrate as a sufficient and legal recruit, but who
obstinately persisted in declaring, that his con-
science would not permit him to embrace the
profession of a soldier.⁵ It could scarcely be
expected that any government should suffer the
action of Marcellus the centurion to pass with
impunity. On the day of a public festival, that
officer threw away his belt, his arms, and the
ensigns of his office, and exclaimed with a loud
voice, that he would obey none but Jesus Christ,
the eternal king, and that he renounced for ever
the use of carnal weapons, and the service of an
idolatrous master. The soldiers, as soon as they
recovered from their astonishment, secured the
person of Marcellus. He was examined in the
city of Tingi by the president of that part of
Mauritania; and as he was convicted by his own
confession, he was condemned and beheaded for

the energy. Notwithstanding the authority of Eusebius, and the si-
lence of Lactantius, Ambrose, Sulpicius, Orosius, &c. it has been
long believed, that the Thebaean legion, consisting of 6000 christians,
suffered martyrdom, by the order of Maximian, in the valley of the
Penine Alps. The story was first published about the middle of the
fifth century, by Eucherius, bishop of Lyons, who received it from
certain persons, who received it from Isaac, bishop of Geneva, who
is said to have received it from Theodore, bishop of Octodurum. The
abbey of St. Maurice still subsists, a rich monument of the credulity
of Sigismond, king of Burgundy. See an excellent dissertation in
the thirty-sixth volume of the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*, p. 427-454.

⁵ See the *Acta Sincera*, p. 299. The accounts of his martyr-
dom, and of that of Marcellus, bear every mark of truth and au-
thenticity.

the crime of desertion.^b Examples of such a nature savour much less of religious persecution than of martial or even civil law: but they served to alienate the mind of the emperors; to justify the severity of Galerius, who dismissed a great number of christian officers from their employments; and to authorize the opinion, that a sect of enthusiasts, which avowed principles so repugnant to the public safety, must either remain useless, or would soon become dangerous, subjects of the empire.

After the success of the Persian war had raised the hopes and the reputation of Galerius; he passed a winter with Diocletian in the palace of Nicomedia; and the fate of christianity became the object of their secret consultations.¹ The experienced emperor was still inclined to pursue measures of lenity; and though he readily consented to exclude the christians from holding any employments in the household or the army, he urged in the strongest terms the danger as well as cruelty of shedding the blood of those deluded fanatics. Galerius at length extorted from him the permission of summoning a council, composed of a few persons the most distinguished in the civil and military departments of the state. The important question was agitated in their presence; and those ambitious courtiers easily

CHAP.
XVI.^b *Acta Sincera*, p. 302.¹ *De M. P. c. 11.* Lactantius (or whoever was the author of this little treatise) was, at that time, an inhabitant of Nicomedia; but it seems difficult to conceive how he could acquire so accurate a knowledge of what passed in the imperial cabinet.

CHAP. discerned, that it was incumbent on them to
XVI. second, by their eloquence, the importunate violence of the Caesar. It may be presumed, that they insisted on every topic which might interest the pride, the piety, or the fears, of their sovereign in the destruction of christianity. Perhaps they represented, that the glorious work of the deliverance of the empire was left imperfect, as long as an independent people was permitted to subsist and multiply in the heart of the provinces. The christians (it might speciously be alleged), renouncing the gods and the institutions of Rome, had constituted a distinct republic, which might yet be suppressed before it had acquired any military force; but which was already governed by its own laws and magistrates, was possessed of a public treasure, and was intimately connected, in all its parts, by the frequent assemblies of the bishops, to whose decrees their numerous and opulent congregations yielded an implicit obedience. Arguments like these may seem to have determined the reluctant mind of Diocletian to embrace a new system of persecution: but though we may suspect, it is not in our power to relate, the secret intrigues of the palace, the private views and resentments, the jealousy of women or eunuchs, and all those trifling but decisive causes which so often influence the fate of empires, and the councils of the wisest monarchs.^k

^k The only circumstance which we can discover is the devotion and jealousy of the mother of Galerius. She is described by Lactantius, as *Deorum montium cultrix; mulier admodum superstitionis*. She had a great influence over her son, and was offended by the disregard of some of her christian servants.

The pleasure of the emperors was at length CHAP. signified to the christians, who, during the course XVI.
of this melancholy winter, had expected, with Detnolition
anxiety, the result of so many secret consulta-^{of the}
tions. The twenty-third of February, which church of
coincided with the Roman festival of the Ter-^{Nicomedia,}
minalia,^{A. D. 303,}^{23d Feb.} was appointed (whether from acci-
dental or design) to set bounds to the progress of
christianity. At the earliest dawn of day, the
prætorian prefect,^m accompanied by several
generals, tribunes, and officers of the revenue,
repaired to the principal church of Nicomedia,
which was situated on an eminence in the most
populous and beautiful part of the city. The
doors were instantly broke open; they rushed
into the sanctuary; and as they searched in vain
for some visible object of worship, they were
obliged to content themselves with committing
to the flames the volumes of holy scripture. The
ministers of Diocletian were followed by a nu-
merous body of guards and pioneers, who march-
ed in order of battle, and were provided with all
the instruments used in the destruction of forti-
fied cities. By their incessant labour, a sacred
edifice, which towered above the imperial palace,
and had long excited the indignation and envy

¹ The worship and festival of the god *Terminus* are elegantly ill-
lustrated by M. de Boze, *Mem. de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, tom.
1, p. 50.

^m In our only ms. of Lactantius, we read *profectus*; but reason,
and the authority of all the critics, allow us, instead of that word,
which destroys the sense of the passage, to substitute *præfectus*.

CHAP. of the gentiles, was in a few hours levelled with
XVI. the ground.^a

The first edict against the christians, 24th of February. The next day the general edict of persecution was published; and though Diocletian, still averse to the effusion of blood, had moderated one refusing to offer sacrifice should immediately be burnt alive, the penalties inflicted on the obstinacy of the christians might be deemed sufficiently rigorous and effectual. It was enacted, that their churches, in all the provinces of the empire, should be demolished to their foundations; and the punishment of death was denounced against all who should presume to hold any secret assemblies for the purpose of religious worship. The philosophers, who now assumed the unworthy office of directing the blind zeal of persecution, had diligently studied the nature and genius of the christian religion; and as they were not ignorant that the speculative doctrines of the faith were supposed to be contained in the writings of the prophets, of the evangelists, and of the apostles, they most probably suggested the order, that the bishops and presbyters should deliver all their sacred books into the hands of the magistrates, who were commanded, under the severest penalties, to burn them in a public

^a Lactantius de M. P. c. 12, gives a very lively picture of the destruction of the church.

* Mosheim (p. 922-926), from many scattered passages of Lactantius and Eusebius, has collected a very just and accurate notion of this edict; though he sometimes deviates into conjecture and refinement.

and solemn manner. By the same edict, the ^{CHAP.} _{XVI.} property of the church was at once confiscated ; and the several parts of which it might consist were either sold to the highest bidder, united to the imperial domain, bestowed on the cities and corporations, or granted to the solicitations of rapacious courtiers. After taking such effectual measures to abolish the worship, and to dissolve the government, of the christians, it was thought necessary to subject to the most intolerable hardships the condition of those perverse individuals who should still reject the religion of nature, of Rome, and of their ancestors. Persons of a liberal birth were declared incapable of holding any honours or employments ; slaves were for ever deprived of the hopes of freedom ; and the whole body of the people were put out of the protection of the law. The judges were authorised to hear and to determine every action that was brought against a christian ; but the christians were not permitted to complain of any injury which they themselves had suffered : and thus those unfortunate sectaries were exposed to the severity, while they were excluded from the benefits, of public justice. This new species of martyrdom, so painful and lingering, so obscure and ignominious, was, perhaps, the most proper to weary the constancy of the faithful ; nor can it be doubted that the passions and interest of mankind were disposed on this occasion to second the designs of the emperors. But the policy of a well-ordered government must sometimes have

CHAP. interposed in behalf of the oppressed christians ;
 XVI. nor was it possible for the Roman princes entirely to remove the apprehension of punishment, or to connive at every act of fraud and violence, without exposing their own authority and the rest of their subjects to the most alarming dangers.^p

Zeal and
punish-
ment of a
christian.

This edict was scarcely exhibited to the public view, in the most conspicuous place of Nicomedia, before it was torn down by the hands of a christian, who expressed, at the same time, by the bitterest invectives, his contempt as well as abhorrence for such impious and tyrannical governors. His offence, according to the mildest laws, amounted to treason, and deserved death : and if it be true that he was a person of rank and education, those circumstances could serve only to aggravate his guilt. He was burnt, or rather roasted, by a slow fire ; and his executioners, zealous to revenge the personal insult which had been offered to the emperors, exhausted every refinement of cruelty, without being able to subdue his patience, or to alter the steady and insulting smile which in his dying agonies he still preserved in his countenance. The christians, though they confessed that his conduct had not been strictly conformable to the laws of prudence, admired the divine fervour of his zeal ; and the excessive commendations which they lavished on the memory of their hero and martyr con-

^p Many ages afterwards, Edward 1 practised, with great success, the same mode of persecution against the clergy of England. See Hume's History of England, vol. ii, p. 300, last 4to edition.

tributed to fix a deep impression of terror and CHAP.
hatred in the mind of Diocletian.⁹ XVI.

His fears were soon alarmed by the view of a fire of the danger from which he very narrowly escaped. Within fifteen days the palace of Nicomedia, and even the bedchamber of Diocletian, were twice in flames; and though both times they were extinguished without any material damage, the singular repetition of the fire was justly considered as an evident proof that it had not been the effect of chance or negligence. The suspicion naturally fell on the christians; and it was suggested with some degree of probability, that those desperate fanatics, provoked by their present sufferings, and apprehensive of impending calamities, had entered into a conspiracy with their faithful brethren, the eunuchs of the palace, against the lives of two emperors, whom they detested as the irreconcileable enemies of the church of God. Jealousy and resentment prevailed in every breast, but especially in that of Diocletian. A great number of persons, distinguished either by the offices which they had filled, or by the favour which they had enjoyed, were thrown into prison. Every mode of torture was put in practice, and the court, as well as city, was polluted with many bloody executions:¹⁰

⁹ Lactantius only calls him quidam, *etsi non recte, magno tamen animo, &c.* c. 12. Eusebius (l. viii, c. 5) adorns him with secular honours. Neither have condescended to mention his name; but the Greeks celebrate his memory under that of John. See Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. v, part ii, p. 320.

¹⁰ Lactantius de M. P. c. 13, 14. *Potentissimi quondam eunuchi necati, per quos palatium et ipse constabat.* Euscbius (l. viii, c. 6) mentions

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but as it was found impossible to extort any discovery of this mysterious transaction, it seems incumbent on us either to presume the innocence, or to admire the resolution, of the sufferers. A few days afterwards Galerius hastily withdrew himself from Nicomedia, declaring, that if he delayed his departure from that devoted palace, he should fall a sacrifice to the rage of the christians. The ecclesiastical historians, from whom alone we derive a partial and imperfect knowledge of this persecution, are at a loss how to account for the fears and dangers of the emperors. Two of these writers, a prince and a rhetorician, were eye-witnesses of the fire of Nicomedia. The one ascribes it to lightning, and the divine wrath; the other affirms, that it was kindled by the malice of Galerius himself.⁵

Execution
of the first
edict.

As the edict against the christians was designed for a general law of the whole empire, and as Diocletian and Galerius, though they might not wait for the consent, were assured of the concurrence, of the western princes, it would appear more consonant to our ideas of policy, that the governors of all the provinces should have received secret instructions to publish, on one and the same day, this declaration of war within their respective departments. It was at least to be

mentions the cruel extortions of the eunuchs, Gorgonius and Dorotheus, and of Anthimus, bishop of Nicomedia; and both those writers describe, in a vague but tragical manner, the horrid scenes which were acted even in the imperial presence.

⁵ See Lactantius, Eusebius, and Constantine, ad Cœtum Sanc-
torum, c. 25. Eusebius confesses his ignorance of the cause of the
fire.

expected, that the convenience of the public highways and established posts would have enabled the emperors to transmit their orders with the utmost dispatch from the palace of Nicomedia to the extremities of the Roman world; and that they would not have suffered fifty days to elapse before the edict was published in Syria, and near four months before it was signified to the cities of Africa.^t This delay may perhaps be imputed to the cautious temper of Diocletian, who had yielded a reluctant consent to the measures of persecution, and who was desirous of trying the experiment under his more immediate eye, before he gave way to the disorders and discontent which it must inevitably occasion in the distant provinces. At first, indeed, the magistrates were restrained from the effusion of blood; but the use of every other severity was permitted, and even recommended, to their zeal; nor could the christians, though they cheerfully resigned the ornaments of their churches, resolve to interrupt their religious assemblies, or to deliver their sacred books to the flames. The pious obstinacy of Felix, an African bishop, appears to have embarrassed the subordinate ministers of the government. The curator of his city sent him in chains to the proconsul. The proconsul transmitted him to the praetorian prefect of Italy; and Felix, who disdained even to give an evasive answer, was at length beheaded at Venusia, in Lucania, a place on which the birth of Horace

^t Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiast.* tom. v, part i, p. 43.

CHAP. XVI. has conferred fame.^u This precedent, and perhaps some imperial rescript, which was issued in consequence of it, appeared to authorise the governors of provinces, in punishing with death the refusal of the christians to deliver up their sacred books. There were undoubtedly many persons who embraced this opportunity of obtaining the crown of martyrdom ; but there were likewise too many who purchased an ignominious life, by discovering and betraying the holy scripture into the hands of infidels. A great number even of bishops and presbyters acquired, by this criminal compliance, the opprobrious epithet of *traditors* ; and their offence was productive of much present scandal, and of much future discord, in the African church.^x

Demolition of the churches. The copies, as well as the versions, of scripture were already so multiplied in the empire, that the most severe inquisition could no longer be attended with any fatal consequences ; and even the sacrifice of those volumes, which, in every congregation, were preserved for public use, required the consent of some treacherous and unworthy christians. But the ruin of the churches was easily effected by the authority of the government, and by the labour of the pagans. In some provinces, however, the magistrates contented themselves with shutting up the places of

^u See the *Acta Sincera* of Ruinart, p. 353 : those of *Fœlix* of *Thibara*, or *Tibur*, appear much less corrupted than in the other editions, which afford a lively specimen of legendary licence.

^x See the first book of *Optatus* of *Milevis* against the donatists at *Paris*, 1700. [¶] *Edit. Dupin.* He lived under the reign of *Valeus*.

religious worship. In others, they more literally complied with the terms of the edict ; and after taking away the doors, the benches, and the pulpit, which they burnt, as it were in a funeral pile, they completely demolished the remainder of the edifice.⁷ It is perhaps to this melancholy occasion, that we should apply a very remarkable story, which is related with so many circumstances of variety and improbability, that it serves rather to excite than to satisfy our curiosity. In a small town in Phrygia, of whose name as well as situation we are left ignorant, it should seem, that the magistrates and the body of the people had embraced the christian faith ; and as some resistance might be apprehended to the execution of the edict, the governor of the province was supported by a numerous detachment of legionaries. On their approach the citizens threw themselves into the church, with the resolution either of defending by arms that sacred edifice, or of perishing in its ruins. They indignantly rejected the notice and permission which was given to them, to retire, till the soldiers, provoked by their obstinate refusal, set fire to the building on all sides, and consumed, by this ex-

⁷ The ancient monuments, published at the end of Optatus, p. 261, &c. describe, in a very circumstantial manner, the proceedings of the governors in the destruction of churches. They made a minute inventory of the plate, &c. which they found in them. That of the church of Cirta, in Numidia, is still extant. It consisted of two chalices of gold, and six of silver ; six urns, one kettle, seven lamps, all likewise of silver ; besides a large quantity of brass utensils, and wearing apparel.

CHAP. traordinary kind of martyrdom, a great number
XVI. of Phrygians, with their wives and children.²

Subsequent Some slight disturbances, though they were
edicts. suppressed almost as soon as excited, in Syria
and the frontiers of Armenia, afforded the ene-
mies of the church a very plausible occasion to
insinuate, that those troubles had been secretly
fomented by the intrigues of the bishops, who
had already forgotten their ostentatious profes-
sions of passive and unlimited obedience.³
The resentment, or the fears, of Diocletian, at
length transported him beyond the bounds of
moderation, which he had hitherto preserved,
and he declared, in a series of cruel edicts, his
intention of abolishing the christian name. By
the first of these edicts, the governors of the
provinces were directed to apprehend all persons
of the ecclesiastical order; and the prisons des-
tined for the vilest criminals were soon filled
with a multitude of bishops, presbyters, deacons,

² Lactantius (*Institut. Divin.* v. 11) confines the calamity to the *conventiculum*, with its congregation. Eusebius (viii. 11) extends it to a whole city, and introduces something very like a regular siege. His ancient Latin translator, Rufinus, adds the important circum-
stance of the permission given to the inhabitants of retiring from
thence. As Phrygia reached to the confines of Isauria, it is possible
that the restless temper of those independent barbarians may have
contributed to this misfortune.

³ Eusebius, l. viii, c. 6. M. de Valois (with some probability) thinks that he has discovered the Syrian rebellion in an oration of Libanius; and that it was a rash attempt of the tribune Eugenius, who with only five hundred men seized Antioch, and might perhaps allure the christians by the promise of religious toleration. From Eusebius (l. ix, c. 8), as well as from Moses of Chorene (*Hist. Armen.* l. ii, c. 77, &c.), it may be inferred, that christianity was already introduced into Armenia.

readers, and exorcists. By a second edict, the ^{CHAP.} ~~XVI.~~ magistrates were commanded to employ every method of severity, which might reclaim them from their odious superstition, and oblige them to return to the established worship of the gods. This rigorous order was extended, by a subsequent edict, to the whole body of christians, who were exposed to a violent and general persecution.^b Instead of those salutary restraints which had required the direct and solemn testimony of an accuser, it became the duty as well as the interest of the imperial officers to discover, to pursue, and to torment, the most obnoxious among the faithful. Heavy penalties were denounced against all who should presume to save a proscribed sectary from the just indignation of the gods, and of the emperors. Yet, notwithstanding the severity of this law, the virtuous courage of many of the pagans, in concealing their friends or relations, affords an honourable proof, that the rage of superstition had not extinguished in their minds the sentiments of nature and humanity.^c

Diocletian had no sooner published his edicts ^{General idea of the} against the christians, than, as if he had been ^{persecution,} desirous of committing to other hands the work ^{of} persecution, he divested himself of the impe-

^b See Mosheim, p. 938. The text of Eusebius very plainly shews that the governors, whose powers were enlarged, not restrained, by the new laws, could punish with death the most obstinate christians, as an example to their brethren.

^c Athanasius, p. 833, ap. Tillemont, Mem. Ecclesiast. tom. v, part i, p. 90.

CHAP. ^{XVI.} rial purple. The character and situation of his colleagues and successors sometimes urged them to enforce, and sometimes inclined them to suspend, the execution of these rigorous laws; nor can we acquire a just and distinct idea of this important period of ecclesiastical history, unless we separately consider the state of christianity, in the different parts of the empire, during the space of ten years, which elapsed between the first edicts of Diocletian, and the final peace of the church.

^{in the western provinces, under Constantius and Constantine;} The mild and humane temper of Constantius was averse to the oppression of any part of his subjects. The principal offices of his palace were exercised by christians. He loved their persons, esteemed their fidelity, and entertained not any dislike to their religious principles. But as long as Constantius remained in the subordinate station of Cæsar, it was not in his power openly to reject the edicts of Diocletian, or to disobey the commands of Maximian. His authority contributed, however, to alleviate the sufferings which he pitied and abhorred. He consented, with reluctance, to the ruin of the churches; but he ventured to protect the christians themselves from the fury of the populace, and from the rigour of the laws. The provinces of Gaul (under which we may probably include those of Britain) were indebted for the singular tranquillity which they enjoyed, to the gentle interposition of their sovereign.^a But Datianus,

^a Eusebius, I. viii, c. 13. Lactantius de M. P. c. 15. Dodwell (Dissertat. Cyprian. xi, 75) represents them as inconsistent with

the president or governor of Spain, actuated either by zeal or policy, chose rather to execute the public edicts of the emperors, than to understand the secret intentions of Constantius ; and it can scarcely be doubted, that his provincial administration was stained with the blood of a few martyrs.^e The elevation of Constantius to the supreme and independent dignity of Augustus gave a free scope to the exercise of his virtues ; and the shortness of his reign did not prevent him from establishing a system of toleration, of which he left the precept and the example to his son Constantine. His fortunate son, from the first moment of his accession, declaring himself the protector of the church, at length deserved the appellation of the first emperor who publicly professed and established the christian religion. The motives of his conversion, as they may variously be deduced from benevolence, from policy, from conviction, or from remorse ; and the progress of the revolution, which under his powerful influence, and that of his sons, rendered christianity the reigning religion of the Roman

each other. But the former evidently speaks of Constantius in the station of Cæsar, and the latter of the same prince in the rank of Augustus.

* Datianus is mentioned in Gruter's *Inscriptions*, as having determined the limits between the territories of Pax Julia, and those of Ebora, both cities in the southern part of Lusitania. If we recollect the neighbourhood of those places to Cape St. Vincent, we may suspect that the celebrated deacon and martyr of that name has been inaccurately assigned by Prudentius, &c., to Saragossa, or Valentia. See the pompous history of his sufferings, in the *Memoires de Tillemont*, tom. v, part ii, p. 58-85. Some critics are of opinion, that the department of Constantius, as Cæsar, did not include Spain, which still continued under the immediate jurisdiction of Maximian.

CHAP. empire, will form a very interesting and important chapter in the third volume of this history.
 XVI. At present it may be sufficient to observe, that every victory of Constantine was productive of some relief or benefit to the church.

in Italy
and Afri-
ca, under
Maximian
and Se-
verus;

The provinces of Italy and Africa experienced a short but violent persecution. The rigorous edicts of Diocletian were strictly and cheerfully executed by his associate Maximian, who had long hated the christians, and who delighted in acts of blood and violence. In the autumn of the first year of the persecution, the two emperors met at Rome to celebrate their triumph; several oppressive laws appear to have issued from their secret consultations, and the diligence of the magistrates was animated by the presence of their sovereigns. After Diocletian had divested himself of the purple, Italy and Africa were administered under the name of Severus, and were exposed, without defence, to the implacable resentment of his master Galerius. Among the martyrs of Rome, Adauctus deserves the notice of posterity. He was of a noble family in Italy, and had raised himself, through the successive honours of the palace, to the important office of treasurer of the private demesnes. Adauctus is the more remarkable for being the only person of rank and distinction who appears to have suffered death, during the whole course of this general persecution.²

² Eusebius, I. viii, c. 11. Gruter, Inscript. p. 1171. No. 18. Ruinus has mistaken the office of Adauctus, as well as the place of his martyrdom.

The revolt of Maxentius immediately restored CHAP.
peace to the churches of Italy and Africa; and XVI.
the same tyrant who oppressed every other class under
of his subjects shewed himself just, humane, and ^{Maxen-}
even partial, towards the afflicted christians. ^{tius;}
He depended on their gratitude and affection, and very naturally presumed, that the injuries which they had suffered, and the dangers which they still apprehended from his most inveterate enemy, would secure the fidelity of a party already considerable by their numbers and opulence.[¶] Even the conduct of Maxentius towards the bishops of Rome and Carthage may be considered as the proof of his toleration, since it is probable that the most orthodox princes would adopt the same measures with regard to their established clergy. Marcellus, the former of those prelates, had thrown the capitol into confusion, by the severe penance which he imposed on a great number of christians, who, during the late persecution, had renounced or dissembled their religion. The rage of faction broke out in frequent and violent seditions; the blood of the faithful was shed by each other's hands; and the exile of Marcellus, whose prudence seems to have been less eminent than his zeal, was found to be the only measure capable of restoring peace to the distracted church of

[¶] Eusebius, l. viii, c. 14. But as Maxentius was vanquished by Constantine, it suited the purpose of Lactantius to place his death among those of the persecutors.

CHAP. Rome.⁵ The behaviour of Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, appears to have been still more reprehensible. A deacon of that city had published a libel against the emperor. The offender took refuge in the episcopal palace; and though it was somewhat early to advance any claims of ecclesiastical immunities, the bishop refused to deliver him up to the officers of justice. For this treasonable resistance, Mensurius was summoned to court, and instead of receiving a legal sentence of death or banishment, he was permitted, after a short examination, to return to his diocese.¹ Such was the happy condition of the christian subjects of Maxentius, that whenever they were desirous of procuring for their own use any bodies of martyrs, they were obliged to purchase them from the most distant provinces of the East. A story is related of Aglae, a Roman lady, descended from a consular family, and possessed of so ample an estate, that it requir-

⁵ The epitaph of Marcellus is to be found in Gruter; Inscript. p. 1172, No. 3, and it contains all that we know of his history. Marcellinus and Marcellus, whose names follow in the list of popes, are supposed by many critics to be different persons; but the learned Abbé de Longuerue was convinced that they were one and the same.

Veridicus rector lapsis quia crimina flere
 Praedixit miseris, fuit, omnibus hostis amarus.
 Hinc furor, hinc odium; sequitur discordia, lites,
 Seditio, cædes: solvuntur foedera pacis.
 Crimen ob alterius, christum qui in pace negavit
 Finibus expulsus patria est feritate tyranni.
 Hæc breviter Damasus voluit comp̄r̄ta referre:
 Marcelli populus meritum cognoscere posset.

We may observe that Damasus was made bishop of Rome, A. D. 366;

¹ Optatus contr. Donatist. l. i, c. 17, 18.

ed the management of seventy-three stewards. CHAP.
Among these, Boniface was the favourite of his
mistress; and as Aglae mixed love with devo-
tion, it is reported that he was admitted to share
her bed. Her fortune enabled her to gratify the
pious desire of obtaining some sacred relics from
the East. She intrusted Boniface with a con-
siderable sum of gold, and a large quantity of
aromatics; and her lover, attended by twelve
horsemen and three covered chariots, undertook
a remote pilgrimage, as far as Tarsus in Cilicia.^k

The sanguinary temper of Galerius, the first and principal author of the persecution, was formidable to those christians, whom their mis-
fortunes had placed within the limits of his do-
minions; and it may fairly be presumed, that
many persons of a middle rank, who were not
confined by the chains either of wealth or of
poverty, very frequently deserted their native
country, and sought a refuge in the milder cli-
mate of the West. As long as he commanded
only the armies and provinces of Illyricum, he
could with difficulty either find or make a con-
siderable number of martyrs, in a warlike coun-
try, which had entertained the missionaries of the
gospel with more coldness and reluctance than
any other part of the empire.^l But when Ga-

in Illyri-
cum and
the East
under Ga-
lerius and
Maximian.

^k The acts of the Passion of St. Boniface, which abound in mi-
racles and declamation, are published by Ruinart (p. 282-291), both
in Greek and Latin, from the authority of very ancient manuscripts.

^l During the four first centuries, there exist few traces of either
bishops or bishoprics in the western Illyricum. It has been thought
probable

CHAP. Ierius had obtained the supreme power and the
 XVI. government of the East, he indulged in their
 fullest extent his zeal and cruelty, not only in
 the provinces of Thrace and Asia, which ac-
 knowledged his immediate jurisdiction, but in
 those of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, where
 Maximin gratified his own inclination, by yield-
 ing a rigorous obedience to the stern commands
 of his benefactor.^m The frequent disappoint-
 ments of his ambitious views, the experience of
 six years of persecution, and the salutary reflec-
 tions which a lingering and painful distemper
 suggested to the mind of Galerius, at length
 convinced him that the most violent efforts of
 despotism are insufficient to extirpate a whole
 people, or to subdue their religious prejudices.
 Desirous of repairing the mischief that he had
 occasioned, he published in his own name, and
 in those of Licinius and Constantine, a general
 edict, which, after a pompous recital of the im-
 perial titles, proceeded in the following manner :

Galerius
 publishes
 an edict of
 toleration.

“ Among the important cares which have oc-
 “ cupied our mind for the utility and preserva-
 “ tion of the empire, it was our intention to
 “ correct and re-establish all things according to

probable that the primate of Milan extended his jurisdiction over Sir-
 mium, the capital of that great province. See the *Geographia Sacra*
 of Charles de St. Paul, p. 68-76, with the observations of Lucas
 Holstenius.

^m The eighth book of Eusebius, as well as the supplement concerning
 the martyrs of Palestine, principally relate to the persecution of
 Galerius and Maximin. The general lamentations with which
 Lactantius opens the fifth book of his *Divine Institutions* allude to
 their cruelty.

" the ancient laws and public discipline of the CHAP.
 " Romans. We were particularly desirous of XVI.
 " reclaiming into the way of reason and nature
 " the deluded christians who had renounced the
 " religion and ceremonies instituted by their
 " fathers; and presumptuously despising the
 " practice of antiquity, had invented extravagant
 " laws and opinions according to the dictates of
 " their fancy, and had collected a various society
 " from the different provinces of our empire.
 " The edicts which we have published to enforce
 " the worship of the gods having exposed many
 " of the christians to danger and distress, many
 " having suffered death, and many more, who
 " still persist in their impious folly, being left
 " destitute of *any* public exercise of religion, we
 " are disposed to extend to those unhappy men
 " the effects of our wonted clemency. We per-
 " mit them therefore freely to profess their pri-
 " vate opinions, and to assemble in their con-
 " venticles without fear or molestation, provided
 " always that they preserve a due respect to the
 " established laws and government. By another
 " rescript we shall signify our intentions to the
 " judges and magistrates; and we hope that our
 " indulgence will engage the christians to offer
 " up their prayers to the deity whom they adore,
 " for our safety and prosperity, for their own,
 " and for that of the republic."ⁿ It is not

ⁿ Eusebius (l. viii, c. 17) has given us a Greek version, and Lactantius (de M. P. c. 34) the Latin original, of this memorable edict. Neither of these writers seems to recollect how directly it contradicts whatever they have just affirmed of the remorse and repentance of Galerius.

CHAP. usually in the language of edicts and manifestos
XVI. that we should search for the real character or
the secret motives of princes ; but as these were
the words of a dying emperor, his situation, per-
haps, may be admitted as a pledge of his since-
rity.

Peace of
the church.

When Galerius subscribed this edict of tolera-
tion, he was well assured that Licinius would
readily comply with the inclinations of his friend
and benefactor, and that any measures in favour
of the christians would obtain the approbation
of Constantine : but the emperor would not
venture to insert in the preamble the name of
Maximin, whose consent was of the greatest im-
portance, and who succeeded a few days after-
wards to the provinces of Asia. In the first six
months, however, of his new reign, Maximin
affected to adopt the prudent councils of his
predecessor; and though he never condescended
to secure the tranquillity of the church by a
public edict, Sabinus, his prætorian prefect,
addressed a circular letter to all the governors
and magistrates of the provinces, expatiating on
the imperial clemency, acknowledging the invin-
cible obstinacy of the christians, and directing
the officers of justice to cease their ineffectual
prosecutions, and to connive at the secret assem-
blies of those enthusiasts. In consequence of
these orders, great numbers of christians were
released from prison, or delivered from the mines.
The confessors, singing hymns of triumph, re-
turned into their own countries ; and those who
had yielded to the violence of the tempest soli-

cited with tears of repentance their re-admission CHAP.
XVI.
into the bosom of the church.*

But this treacherous calm was of short duration ; nor could the christians of the East place any confidence in the character of their sovereign. Maximin
prepares to
renew the
persecu-
tion.

Cruelty and superstition were the ruling passions of the soul of Maximin. The former suggested the means, the latter pointed out the objects, of persecution. The emperor was devoted to the worship of the gods, to the study of magic, and to the belief of oracles. The prophets or philosophers, whom he revered as the favourites of heaven, were frequently raised to the government of provinces, and admitted into his most secret councils. They easily convinced him, that the christians had been indebted for their victories to their regular discipline, and that the weakness of polytheism had principally flowed from a want of union and subordination among the ministers of religion. A system of government was therefore instituted, which was evidently copied from the policy of the church. In all the great cities of the empire, the temples were repaired and beautified by the order of Maximin ; and the officiating priests of the various deities were subjected to the authority of a superior pontiff, destined to oppose the bishop, and to promote the cause of paganism. These pontiffs, acknowledged, in their turn, the supreme jurisdiction of the metropolitans or high priests of the province, who acted as the immediate

* Eusebius, l. ix, c. 1. He inserts the epistle of the prefect.

CHAP. vicegerents of the emperor himself. A white
XVI. robe was the ensign of their dignity ; and these
new prelates were carefully selected from the
most noble and opulent families. By the influ-
ence of the magistrates, and of the sacerdotal order, a great number of dutiful addresses were
obtained, particularly from the cities of Nico-
media, Antioch, and Tyre, which artfully repre-
sented the well-known intentions of the court as
the general sense of the people ; solicited the
emperor to consult the laws of justice rather than
the dictates of his clemency ; expressed their
abhorrence of the christians, and humbly prayed
that those impious sectaries might at least be
excluded from the limits of their respective ter-
ritories. The answer of Maximin to the address
which he obtained from the citizens of Tyre is
still extant. He praises their zeal and devotion
in terms of the highest satisfaction, descants on
the obstinate impiety of the christians, and be-
trays, by the readiness with which he consents to
their banishment, that he considered himself as
receiving, rather than as conferring, an obliga-
tion. The priests as well as the magistrates were
empowered to enforce the execution of his edicts,
which were engraved on tables of brass ; and
though it was recommended to them to "avoid
the effusion of blood, the most cruel and igno-
minious punishments were inflicted on the refrac-
tory christians.^p

^p See Eusebius, I. viii, c. 14, I. ix, c. 2-8. Lactantius de M. P.
c. 36. These writers agree in representing the acts of Maximin ;
but the former relates the execution of several martyrs, while the lat-
ter expressly affirms, *occidi servos Dei vetuit.*

The Asiatic christians had every thing to CHAP.
dread from the severity of a bigotted monarch, XVI.
who prepared his measures of violence with such End of the
deliberate policy. But a few months had scarcely persecu-
elapsed, before the edicts published by the two tions.
western emperors obliged Maximin to suspend
the prosecution of his designs: the civil war which
he so rashly undertook against Licinius employed
all his attention; and the defeat and death of
Maximin soon delivered the church from the last
and most implacable of her enemies.^a

In this general view of the persecution, which Probable
was first authorised by the edicts of Diocletian, account of
I have purposely refrained from describing the suffer-
particular sufferings and deaths of the christian ings of the
martyrs. It would have been an easy task, from martyrs
the history of Eusebius, from the declamations of and con-
Lactantius, and from the most ancient acts, to fessors.
collect a long series of horrid and disgusting pictures,
and to fill many pages with racks and scourges, with iron hooks, and red-hot beds, and
with all the variety of tortures which fire and
steel, savage beasts, and more savage executioners,
could inflict on the human body. These melancholy scenes might be enlivened by a crowd of
visions and miracles, destined either to delay the
death, to celebrate the triumph, or to discover
the relics, of those canonized saints who suffered
for the name of Christ. But I cannot determine

^a A few days before his death, he published a very ample edict of toleration, in which he imputes all the severities which the christians suffered to the judges and governors, who had misunderstood his intentions. See the Edict, in Eusebius, l. ix, c. 16.

CHAP. what I ought to transcribe, till I am satisfied
XVI. how much I ought to believe. The gravest of
the ecclesiastical historians, Eusebius himself, in-
directly confesses, that he has related whatever
might redound to the glory, and that he has
suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace, of
religion.* Such an acknowledgment will na-
turally excite a suspicion, that a writer who has
so openly violated one of the fundamental laws
of history has not paid a very strict regard to
the observance of the other; and the suspicion
will derive additional credit from the character
of Eusebius, which was less tinctured with cre-
dulity, and more practised in the arts of courts,
than that of almost any of his contemporaries.
On some particular occasions, when the magis-
trates were exasperated by some personal motives
of interest or resentment, when the zeal of the
martyrs urged them to forget the rules of pru-
dence, and perhaps of decency, to overturn the
altars, to pour out imprecations against the em-
perors, or to strike the judge as he sat on his
tribunal, it may be presumed that every mode of
torture which cruelty could invent, or constancy
could endure, was exhausted on those devoted

* Such is the fair deduction from two remarkable passages in Euse-
bius, l. viii, c. 2, and de Martyr. Palestin. c. 12. The prudence of
the historian has exposed his own character to censure and suspicion.
It is well known that he himself had been thrown into prison; and it
was suggested that he had purchased his deliverance by some dishon-
ourable compliance. The reproach was urged in his lifetime, and
even in his presence, at the council of Tyre. See Tillemont, Me-
moires Ecclesiastiques, tom. viii, part i, p. 67.

victims.^s Two circumstances, however, have been unwarily mentioned, which insinuate that the general treatment of the christians, who had been apprehended by the officers of justice, was less intolerable than it is usually imagined to have been. 1. The confessors, who were condemned to work in the mines, were permitted, by the humanity or the negligence of their keepers, to build chapels, and freely to profess their religion, in the midst of those dreary habitations.^t 2. The bishops were obliged to check and to censure the forward zeal of the christians, who voluntarily threw themselves into the hands of the magistrates. Some of these were persons oppressed by poverty and debts, who blindly sought to terminate a miserable existence by a glorious death. Others were allured by the hope, that a short confinement would expiate the sins of a whole life; and others again were actuated by the less honourable motive of deriving a plentiful subsistence, and perhaps a considerable profit, from the alms which the charity of the faithful bestowed on the prisoners.^u After the

^s The ancient, and perhaps authentic, account of the sufferings of Tarachus, and his companions (*Acta Sincera Ruinart*, p. 419-448), is filled with strong expressions of resentment and contempt, which could not fail of irritating the magistrate. The behaviour of *Ædesius* to Hierocles, prefect of Egypt, was still more extraordinary, *λογιστὸς τε καὶ εργος τον δικαιηνούς . . . πειθαράτο*. *Euseb. de Martyr. Palestin. c. 5.*

^t *Euseb. de Martyr. Palestin. c. 13.*

^u *Augustin. Collat. Carthagin. Dei, iii, c. 13, ap. Tillemont, Mémoires Ecclesiastiques, tom. v, part i, p. 46.* The controversy with the donatists has reflected some, though perhaps a partial, light on the history of the African church.

CHAP. church had triumphed over all her enemies, the
XVI. interest as well as vanity of the captives prompted
them to magnify the merit of their respective
suffering. A convenient distance of time or place
gave an ample scope to the progress of fiction; and
the frequent instances which might be alleged of
holy martyrs, whose wounds had been instantly
healed, whose strength had been renewed, and
whose lost members had miraculously been re-
stored, were extremely convenient for the purpose
of removing every difficulty, and of silencing
every objection. The most extravagant legends,
as they conducd to the honour of the church,
were applauded by the credulous multitude,
countenanced by the power of the clergy, and
attested by the suspicious evidence of ecclesiasti-
cal history.

Number of martyrs. The vague descriptions of exile and imprisonment, of pain and torture, are so easily exaggerated or softened by the pencil of an artful orator, that we are naturally induced to inquire into a fact of a more distinct and stubborn kind; the number of persons who suffered death in consequence of the edicts published by Diocletian, his associates, and his successors. The recent legendaries record whole armies and cities, which were at once swept away by the undistinguishing rage of persecution. The more ancient writers content themselves with pouring out a liberal effusion of loose and tragical invectives, without condescending to ascertain the precise number of those persons who were permitted to

seal with their blood their belief of the gospel. CHAP.
From the history of Eusebius, it may however be XVI.
collected, that only nine bishops were punished
with death; and we are assured, by his particular
enumeration of the martyrs of Palestine, that no
more than ninety-two christians were entitled to
that honourable appellation.² As we are un-
acquainted with the degree of episcopal zeal and
courage which prevailed at that time, it is not
in our power to draw any useful inferences from
the former of these facts; but the latter may
serve to justify a very important and probable
conclusion. According to the distribution of
Roman provinces, Palestine may be considered
as the sixteenth part of the eastern empire;³

² Eusebius de Martyr. Palestin. c. 13. He closes his narration, by assuring us, that these were the martyrdoms inflicted in Palestine, during the *whole* course of the persecution. The fifth chapter of his eighth book, which relates to the province of Thebais in Egypt, may seem to contradict our moderate computation; but it will only lead us to admire the artful management of the historian. Choosing for the scene of the most exquisite cruelty the most remote and sequestered country of the Roman empire, he relates, that in Thebais from ten to one hundred persons had frequently suffered martyrdom in the same day. But when he proceeds to mention his own journey into Egypt, his language insensibly becomes more cautious and moderate. Instead of a large, but definite number, he speaks of many christians (ολιγον), and most artfully selects two ambiguous words (εισηγημένοι, and επειδημένοι), which may signify either what he had seen or what he had heard; either the expectation, or the execution, of the punishment. Having thus provided a secure evasion, he commits the equivocal passage to his readers and translators; justly conceiving that their piety would induce them to prefer the most favourable sense. There was perhaps some malice in the remark of Theodorus Metochita, that all who, like Eusebius, had been conversant with the Egyptians, delighted in an obscure and intricate style. (See Valesius ad loc.)

³ When Palestine was divided into three, the prefecture of the East contained forty-eight provinces. As the ancient distinctions of nations

CHAP. and since there were some governors, who from
XVI. a real or affected clemency had preserved their
hands unstained with the blood of the faithful,² it is reasonable to believe, that the country which had given birth to christianity produced at least the sixteenth part of the martyrs who suffered death within the dominions of Galerius and Maximin; the whole might consequently amount to about fifteen hundred, a number which, if it is equally divided between the ten years of the persecution, will allow an annual consumption of one hundred and fifty martyrs. Allotting the same proportion to the provinces of Italy, Africa, and perhaps Spain, where, at the end of two or three years, the rigour of the penal laws was either suspended or abolished, the multitude of christians in the Roman empire, on whom a capital punishment was inflicted by a judicial sentence, will be reduced to somewhat less than two thousand persons. Since it cannot be doubted that the christians were more numerous, and their enemies more exasperated, in the time of Diocletian, than they had ever been in any former persecution, this probable and moderate computation may teach us to estimate the number of primitive saints and martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the important purpose of introducing christianity into the world.

nations were long since abolished, the Romans distributed the provinces according to a general proportion of their extent and opulence.

² Ut gloriari possint nullum se innocentiam peremisse, nam et ipse audiri aliques gloriantes, quia administratio sua, in hac parte, fucrit incauta. Lactant. Institut. Divin. v, 11.

We shall conclude this chapter by a melancholy truth, which obtrudes itself on the reluctant mind; that even admitting, without hesitation or inquiry, all that history has recorded, or ^{Conclusion.}devotion has feigned, on the subject of martyrdoms, it must still be acknowledged, that the christians, in the course of their intestine dissensions, have inflicted far greater severities on each other, than they had experienced from the zeal of infidels. During the ages of ignorance which followed the subversion of the Roman empire in the West, the bishops of the imperial city extended their dominion over the laity as well as clergy of the Latin church. The fabric of superstition which they had erected, and which might long have defied the feeble efforts of reason, was at length assaulted by a crowd of daring fanatics, who, from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, assumed the popular character of reformers. The church of Rome defended by violence the empire which she had acquired by fraud; a system of peace and benevolence was soon disgraced by proscriptions, wars, massacres, and the institution of the holy office; and as the reformers were animated by the love of civil, as well as of religious freedom, the catholic princes connected their own interest with that of the clergy, and enforced by fire and the sword the terrors of spiritual censures. In the Netherlands alone, more than one hundred thousand of the subjects of Charles the Fifth are said to have suffered by the hand of the executioner; and this extraordinary number is attested

CHAP. by Grotius,^a a man of genius and learning,
 XVI. who preserved his moderation amidst the fury of
 contending sects, and who composed the annals
 of his own age and country, at a time when the
 invention of printing had facilitated the means
 of intelligence, and increased the danger of
 detection. If we are obliged to submit our belief
 to the authority of Grotius, it must be allowed,
 that the number of protestants, who were exe-
 cuted in a single province and a single reign, far
 exceeded that of the primitive martyrs in the
 space of three centuries, and of the Roman em-
 pire. But if the improbability of the fact itself
 should prevail over the weight of evidence; if
 Grotius should be convicted of exaggerating the
 merit and sufferings of the reformers;^b we
 shall be naturally led to enquire what confidence
 can be placed in the doubtful and imperfect
 monuments of ancient credulity; what degree of
 credit can be assigned to a courtly bishop, and
 a passionate disclaimer, who, under the protec-
 tion of Constantine, enjoyed the exclusive privi-
 lege of recording the persecutions inflicted on the
 christians by the vanquished rivals, or disregarded
 predecessors of their gracious sovereign.

^a Grot. Annal. de Rebus Belgicis, 1. i. p. 12. Edit. fol.

^b Fra-Paolo (Istoria del Concilio Tridentino, 1. iii) reduces the
 number of Belgic martyrs to 50,000. In learning and moderation,
 Fra-Paolo was not inferior to Grotius. The priority of time gives
 some advantage to the evidence of the former, which he loses on the
 other hand by the distance of Venice from the Netherlands.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



Macmillan, Dods, and Stevenson,
 printers, Edinburgh.

28/6

